The Beat Within
Volume 9.34 A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside

STATE OF CALIFORNIA--YOUTH AND ADULT CORRECTIONAL AGENCY ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF THE YOUTH AUTHORITY

4241 Williamsbourgh Drive, Sacramento, California 95823
Telephone (916) 262-1467 - Internet Address - www.cya.ca.gov
TDD (916) 262-2913 - California Relay Service (800) 735-2922

The Beat Within Welcomes CYA

SEP - 3 2004

Michael A. Kroll, Assistant Editor
The Beat Within
275 Ninth Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Kroll:

This letter is in response to your correspondence and discussions with my staff regarding *The Beat Within* publication and your concerns about your publication being returned as an "unauthorized correspondence."

I apologize for the delay in providing clarification and resolution to your concerns. After reviewing your videotape and publication, I have determined that it is an acceptable publication and will be allowed into our institutions.

Your desire to continue communication with wards you have worked with in juvenile halls from Santa Clara to Napa counties will be supported. Your writing program has provided an opportunity for California Youth Authority (CYA) wards to constructively express their life experiences and lessons learned to others. This, no doubt, has made a positive impact to our wards and is in line with my vision for the CYA.

I would like to thank you for your patience and commend you for the great work of your organization. It is necessary for the CYA to collaborate with community organizations in order to make a difference in the lives of youth in the juvenile justice system. Again, thank you! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Walter Allen, III
Director

editor's note

Welcome back faithful editorial-note readers, we are less than a week away from announcing the four winners of our Tenth Editor's-Note Writing Contest. There are so many tasty, must-read submissions to choose from, so which ones do we pick? If you don't know, the contest question asked our writers to share their all-time favorite movie and explain why. Was it the movie story/theme, and/or the events leading up to the movie? With that said, The Beat Within team is busy carefully reading the pieces that were sent our way, which take on a wide range of great, great movies. For your information, voting on the best contest pieces is a total team effort, so all of us, from the young interns to us elders in the office will be eligible to vote on our favorite written pieces, and from that, we will determine who comes in first, second, third and fourth place.

Major breakthrough, after a number of months of corresponding with the officials working in the California Youth Authority about allowing The Beat publication into all of the CYA facilities in California, we have received not only word but an official letter from the Director of CYA, Walter Allen III, stating that he and the whole CYA team of officials have found The Beat Within publication appropriate for its wards. This means CYA wards can now have access to and contribute to The Beat Within!

For a number of years, we simply accepted that The Beat Within was contraband in the CYA. Although we new our paper wasn't what they thought it was, we simply weren't prepared to take on the CYA and all its red tape. So knowing The Beat wasn't allowed, we would find ways around the system, by getting The Beat into the hands of counselors, teachers, spiritual advisors, etc., who saw the value of The Beat. These CYA professionals would then share The Beat with their young men and women.

Now, at least for the time being, we are officially welcomed with open arms by the director himself! What does this mean for The Beat? Well, it means that wards in the CYA will now not only see Xeroxes of their pieces in The Beat Within, but from this point forward, they will have access to reading the whole publication, from viewing the very cool artwork gracing the cover of each issue, to the host of POWs, standouts, BWOs and everything in between! This will surely inspire more writers, artists, and those interested in getting on our mailing list. So in the near future, plan on seeing more voices from the CYA!

With that said, look out CYA for the powerful voices of E-Money, Dat Nguyen, Eddie M. Vargas Sr., JP Depew, Glenn Cornwell, Michael Orozco, to name a few BWO writers/artists, and of course, brace yourself for the juvenile hall writing of the 150 Crew, San Mateo County and every other institution we visit!

We, once again, thank our friend and colleague, Michael Kroll, for taking a big lead in the CYA matter, from writing numerous letters to various CYA department heads, to making plenty of phone calls at all hours of the day, while listening to various CYA officials share their take. Yet he never gave up; he stayed focused and committed, and look what we now have, access to CYA!

With this breakthrough, we think it is in our best interest to get back in touch with Mr. Allen and his people and arrange for us Beat heads to do an outreach in the CYAs to encourage the young men and women incarcerated there to tell their story as writers and artists for The Beat Within readership. Wouldn't it be great to spend a few days in CYA country, visiting as many dorms and classrooms in the CYA as possible, spreading the word!?

One day at a time, so right now we are extremely pleased with this awesome letter sent by Mr. Allen, and tomorrow, well, who knows?? If anything, we should use his letter to help us bring in more allies from other youth facilities who question and challenge our work, the big Beat, etc., like our friends in the South Bay. And we will, too!

This issue may seem a bit smaller than the usual issues you read, given that San Mateo has been on break the last couple of weeks, but it packs as fierce a punch as any issue we've delivered your way. From the touching and heroic POWs (Pieces of the Week) to the BWO (Beat Without) pages in the back, led by our old friends Eddie M. Vargas, Sr., Glenn Cornwell, and SunMansLight. These gentlemen truly set the tone with their timely commentaries.

Before we forget, let's announce The Beat's 11th Editor's-Note Writing Contest question! We decided to bring back a topic that was asked in our workshops about a month ago as our contest question. The question we propose to you contest writers is: "The Camera's Your Destiny — The final words from the judge before you were, to your surprise, temporarily released back into the community for six hours were: 'If you truly cherish your freedom, and you want another opportunity to have your freedom back, take this video camera and show me through the camera's eye what freedom means to you. And if I like what I see, when you come back to my court room tomorrow, I'll grant you your freedom with other conditions pertaining to your case.'

No joke, you have six hours to show the court what freedom means to you, so what will you film, who will you film? How will you attack such a priceless task? No matter if you are already going or already in placement, CYA, or the pen'. No matter if you are fighting a murder case, a gang-related case, a dope case, or another probation violation, you all have this chance to win your freedom back through the power of the camera.

So in your words, describe what you would show the judge in your video footage that would determine whether you got your freedom or further incarceration. And tell us how you think the judge would respond to your footage. Good luck."

All contest entries must be in by December 1, 2004. We will run every entry that crosses our desks in The Beat. Upon running all of the pieces, we editors will vote on our favorite pieces. The top four pieces will be selected and reprinted in a future Beat Without. The top vote-getter will receive a $100 money order. Second top piece will receive a $50 money order and third and fourth place will both receive $25 money orders. Good luck writers. Make sure you have film in the camera!

The topics discussed in issue 9.34, leading up to the fine writing featured in this full-of-knowledge-issue were, "I Wish I Never Saw Or Heard — We all have something that we wish we never saw or heard, and we here at The Beat want you to share that experience with us. Was it seeing a homie or relative in a casket? Was it hearing your dad hit your mom? Was it seeing someone shoot up drugs? Was it hearing that someone passed away? Was it hearing the judge sentence you to CYA, the Ranch, the pen'? Or was it something else entirely?

What was it about that particular incident that you wish you never saw or heard? What effect did it have on you? Take us to that moment in your life and explain to us something that you wish you never saw or heard."

This topic brought out some very moving pieces as you will soon read.

The writing on the second topic, "Wasted Time," was not as insightful as had hoped. The question reads like this: "Wasted Time — We don't know exactly how long you've been sitting in Juvenile Hall, but we know that we see many of you come in and out of Juvenile Hall on a regular basis. Have you ever asked yourself what could you have done with all the time you've wasted locked up?

Or, what could you have done with the time you spent hangin' on the corner, slangin' rocks, committing crimes, smoking weed, drinking alcohol, playing video games, using drugs, actin' a fool or cutting school? Do you think that you could have been doing something more productive?

So tell us, what could you have been doing?"

Lastly, "That Person — Given where you are today, who is that one person you wish you could sit down and talk to, and why? On another note, who is that person you wish would get off of your back?

Remember, it's easy to be nasty, so let's keep the responses Beat appropriate."

This last topic also had so much potential, but for some reason it did not trigger the type of response we had hoped for, yet, you'll see a number of writers who truly did step up on this topic, as well as the others who created their own special topics.

Before we wrap this editorial note up, we would like to acknowledge the following writers for their POW contributions in this issue! Props to Young Buzz from Virginia, he gives us a truly authentic piece of work, as does Noriega and Tru from SF/YGC. And there are more knockout POWs, great writing comes from Smiley, Black Majik, Emmy-boe, Fireball, Imay, Tydiallmighty, and Crazy, all out of the 150 Crew. And there is more! The following 150 POW winners deliver not one but double shots! Major salutes to Young Holla, Young Smokey and Peaches! Congratulation to our POW winners who truly step up as the leaders we know you can be. Every single one of you deliver very revealing stories. Amazing!

So here we sit, day in and day out, creating and refining the core Beat program, which every single one of us here in The Beat office believes in more than any other aspect of the organization we work for. As we get a bit older and recognized as a valid program in our community and in the fundraising community, we are constantly being asked to do more than the workshops and weekly publication. We suppose there is no hiding from this matter, we have to address and embrace the new ideas that are presented to us in order to bring in the money. Sure, we confront the matter with the powers-that-be, including our own executive director, but it doesn't appear to be enough. They claim to hear us, yet it doesn't change a damn thing. Selfishly it isn't fair, yet, who are we to say what's fair when we are the ones not giving the money, but taking the money. So we step up to do many dog and pony shows to get funding for video diaries, have a speakers bureau, do an aftercare component, address mental health, a collaborative here and there, a forum here and next month it's down there. We suppose, in truth, we are not being asked too much to change what it is we have been doing from the inception of the program, but like any old dog, it's hard to change up, even a little, especially when you feel so swamped with the task you already have at hand. We are glad that if we have any changes to make, we have an amazing staff to step up and do what is necessary. How long will this gifted staff, full of heart and commitment, stay together, hmmm, well, let's take it one day at a time.

This issue goes out to Walter Allen III, his staff, and the wards in the California Youth Authority who will now truly take advantage of The Beat Within in a positive manner, and will utilize the publication to raise awareness and touch the lives of our wide readership. Exciting times are ahead knowing that more readers from the inside will be touched by the magic that The Beat Within possesses.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co–founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio and Donna Hunter

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Allan Martinez, Matt Melamed and Arlene Mitri.

Graphics/Layout Editors: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jason Treas, Allan Tinker, David Muhammad, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Mervyn Wool, Omar Turcious, Dennis Morton, Keir Davidson, Dashena Burke, Shawn Baffo, Daniela Rible, Roy Hodgson, Will Roy, Eric Strenger, Amelia Post, Anthony Houston, Devin Melvin.

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidence Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, San Mateo, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden Truth in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at

www.thebeatwithin.org

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Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: ***The honor is ours to have our good friend Aneesha aka Ms. Wadud, share her thoughts with us readers of The Beat. Since the begining of Beat time there has never been a more serious counselor than Ms. Wadud, when it comes to supporting our program with the written word. We must stress Ms. Wadud is not only a loyal serious writer, she's a strong woman who takes her job as a counselor as serious as the best of them, and it shows, from how the young women respond to her and the unit. We send you all of our love Ms. Wadud. You will always have a place with The Beat Within.***

Criminal-Not

Everyone who is in jail
Is not a criminal
There are thousands of innocent people
Sitting in jail right now
It's sad when a man
Can come behind a woman,
Grab her
Beat her
Rape her
And get sentenced to six years
Do three
And go home,
But there are women and men
Who are guilty of possession
With intent to sell two pounds of marijuana,
And they are serving 188-months, (15 years), or more?
Is this justice?
There are women who are
In jail because they wouldn't
"Snitch" on their husbands or boyfriends
Guilty by association
How about this scenario:
Three boys, walking down the street
One of the boys sees a kid
He has beef with
They argue
The boy pulls out a knife
And stabs the kid
He and his two friends run away
And the kid dies
Through investigations,
The police
Find the boy
He tells the whole story
All three boys are charged with murder,
Even though only once committed the crime
Life and crime are no joke
If you see, suspect, or know
That something criminal
Is going to take place
Remove yourself
From the situation
Don't get caught up
Life behind bars can be done
But trust me…It's no fun
This piece is dedicated to some sisters at FCI Dublin Correctional Facility. May Allah's peace be upon you. Keep yo' head up and don't lose faith.
Love always,
-Aneesha aka Ms. Wadud, 150 Crew Counselor

From The Beat: Would you believe while Counselor L-Bo was laying down these lines of poetry, there was an incident to control and a report to compose — and he still got these words of wisdom and inspiration to the page? 'Cause he cares about youth in need of a blessing, lost in despair or rage. And if you haven't met him, you haven't received his full lesson; for he's all that follows, without question — a teacher and a truth-seeker.

The Twenty-One Question Lesson

i would ask my ancestors twenty-one questions
i would ask why i have the curse and the blessin'
why do i have the skills i have in my possession
who did i get my good looks from
when i tell a joke where do i get my humor from
when i'm on the playing field where do i get my moves from
when i compete where do i get my never-lose mood from
when i pass a test where do i get my brains from
when i play centerfield where do i get my range from
when i sing a song who i did i get my voice from
when my mind is made where do i get the never-quit poise from
i would ask why when i get involved do i do it live
and who gave me the determination to overcome problems in stride
i would ask who passed down the self-esteem to stay so clean
and who helps me when i relentlessly pursue my dreams
who is responsible for keeping my bloodline alive
whose spirit survived when the enemy thought it died
who gave me the strength to try my hardest
who gave me the creativity to be an artist
of whose image am i a reflection
is it the person who broke the cycle of repression
the one who changed my family's complexion
or am i that line that will teach the future generation
the twenty-one question lesson

-L-Bo, 150 Crew Counselor

Real Freedom

What it do for ya Beat! It's the one and only Young Smokey from South San Francisco! My bad for not writin' all that much the last few weeks, it's 'cause they moved me to another unit wit these lil' kids.

When they moved me I was in boy's control, but that's another story! When my shhh got moved someone came up on my pencil and notepad so I had to search hella hard to get some new ones. Well my homie Termite and Payazo hooked me up, right on homeboys! This unit coo' but too many young ninjas actin' like lil' kids. Like they stay yellin' out the door or kickin' it and shhh. I can't do all this shhh, ninjas got me going crazy!

But anyway, I'm writin' 'bout ya topic "Cameras." I was hella disappointed 'cause I read all the pieces on it, and all them said something like, "I would go have dinner wit' my family, play wit' my lil' brother or sister, shhh like that, etc." But really how many ninjas that really be on that streets sit down and eat dinner, watch movies, play wit' brothers/sisters, or do anything wit they family? Somebody please tell me 'cause I don't know anyone like that yet, unless they youngstas like seven, eight year olds. Even then, some them ninjas don't be home!

Hang on, off topic real quick, as I write, them ninjas that was bangin' on they door just got sent out the unit, hell yeah. Hopefully now I could get some program.

Anyway, back to what I was sayin', so how is that freedom? All that show is ya could put up a front! 'Cause last time got out the Hall in May 2004 from, Hillcrest, I was only out a month and two days before I caught this case. Before that I was almost locked up two years of Camp, group homes, and the Hall. But that month and two days I was out I barely talked to my mom, let alone spend time wit' my family! Which is hella sad, 'cause now I miss them very much! I was too busy getting' drunk and high, postin' it wit' the homies, messin' wit 'females, and gettin' dirty money. Every thing my PO told me to do when I was out, I didn't! I was supposed to get a job, I was too lazy, didn't go to school 'cause I got my GED, I wouldn't have gone anyway. I ain't never been to high school and I'm 'bout to be eighteen!

So if you really don't do it, it's just a front! Now if I had a camera for six hours, I would go dumb! I would show the judge the everyday life of me, Young Smokey, aka Lil' Nick. I would first get me a hidden camera, that way people know I ain't filmin', feel me! After that I would start at my house, or should I say my apartment! I'm not going to lie, my apartment coo'. Yeah, we got cracks in the ceilin' and people live right above us, got water runnin' down the walls sometimes, and the plumbin' hella bad. And we got old windows wit' a gate around them! Other than that I think my house is nice. My mom does her best to make our house look good. I think she do a great job! So that's where I live at, not too bad!

Then I would show them my 'hood, South San Francisco! First I would step outside my front door, then she would see and hear the couple next door yellin' at each other, "Screw you," "Naw, screw you!" Then I would walk to the corner where my OG potnas be at and post wit' them, then something will go down and SSFPD will roll up. One of the first people they grab is me and we ain't did shhh wrong.

Police: "What's the beep is going on Smokey?! What the hell ya doing here?"

Smokey: "Come on! Ya know I live two houses down!"

Police: "No I don't! Empty ya pockets! Let me see what ya got for me!" Then he would jack me for whatever I got and let me go broke!

So I would walk to Grand Ave, which is the main street in South City, 'cause it got hella liquor stores, bars, Mexican markets, pawnshop, and some places to get food. Before I get to Grand Ave, right on the tip of third lane, there's this one old drunk guy, sittin' outside his house, where it always smell like old beer and piss. Every time he see me he be all, "Hey my friend." I be like, "What up dude," then he'll try to get up and fall down, and I just walk away! I don't even know his name, just seen him everyday for nine years.

When I get to Grand, I will show South San Francisco City Hall, which is in the middle of Grand. I would show how nice it is, wit hella flowers that make out SSF on the lawn, and how the buildin' is hella nice inside and out. But right across the street looks hella poor! Beer cans all over the place, taggin' from my 'hood, missing people posters, and a few bullet holes! But not City Hall side of the street! How's that going to be? Walk a block down and show the judge all the dope fiends from Project 90 that sneak out to get drugs. To me, it's hella funny!

Then I would jump on the bus and roll down Linden Ave., where on damn near every other corner is a liquor store, and the corner that don't get them, just a block or so away on Airport Blvd is a bar or liquor store. And how hella people walk down that street and Grand, mostly single mothers wit' they babies, drunks, people high, bums, or they be homies from the 'hood. Then ya get people tryin' to make money. Don't got to be sellin' drugs, like this one lady stay in front of Wells Fargo Bank on Linden sellin' flowers or sometimes tacos.

Speakin' on gettin' paid, I would show the judge what it like for a Latino to try to get a job. How people will close the register, or move they purse, push they kids on a different side of them, like I'm Jason or something! And all that mess wit' if ya get the job or not! And I wouldn't go in all gangbanged out or nothing. I know how to present myself when I need to! That just the way it is, unfortunately.

Then I would go to South City High, which I never been to but one or two potnas go there, and show how ninjas I know go to class hella high, be on they cell phones in class, sleep, etc. No one cares! It been like that since middle school, I stayed going to seventh and eighth grade high! Then I would show the homies. Now since we can't really get jobs or we to lazy to, we just smoke and drink all day, post it on the block, smash on foo's and to make money we sell crystal or dope!

Then I would go to my grandpa's house, where most of my family be all day. Well my uncle and two of my little cousins, and my grandpa live there, but one of my older sisters be there most of the time to drop her kid off to be watched. And my mom be there after work. When I walk in you would see my uncle sleepin', he claim he don't do drugs. How else ya going to stay awake for a whole week, then sleep for two weeks wit'out wakin' up. Get real! Then ya would see my lil' cousins and my nephews arguin' 'bout some shhh, most likely toys or PS2. Ya know, kid shhh! Then ya would see my grandpa who I love more than anyone all stressed out 'cause he got to deal wit' that shhh. So I would help him clean up the house like I always do, put my lil' cousins in check real quick, talk wit' my grandpa real fast, then leave, then go back to court to show the judge!

He might not let me go, but to me — that is freedom. 'Cause that is what is on the outs for me, that's what I see and do every day. They can't, after seein' all that, be mad at me, 'cause like I said before, I'm a product of my community. How else they expect me to be? They probably won't like it but like I said, that's my freedom! I'm ghost!

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Solid writing. Sounds like a life that you adapted to. Do you want something different? Have you ever thought about doing other different things that you want to do but your life in the 'hood stops you from doing? If you were to get out of the hood, do you think you would change for the better? Why or why not? Do you think the judge would sympathize with the fact that you were raised around a lot of negative things? Why or why not?

Pieces of the Week

Dangerous Dream Prophecy

I got criminal thoughts concocted by my dangerous mind
Spittin' line by line
Like bullets in drive-bys by nines
Slowly creepin' like a car at a murder scene
That's just the endin' of one of my horrible dreams
Let's start at the begginin'
When it started
All 'cause some cat went crazy, stupid dumb, retarded,
Disrespectin' an ex-convict from San Quentin
Dude pulls a caliber he's still talking, shhh not quitting
Gun slapped out his grip
Dude swings and catches the mist
Knife pulled out, ex-con slashes dude's lip
Blood sprays like AK's, bottom lip floppin' 'cause it's ripped
A full-fledged fight breaks out,
But it happened so quick like take out
Get out
Didn't notice the other cut
In my gut
Bleedin' heavily, startin' to slump
Lost too much blood he goin' numb
It's a dream prophecy
While I'm tossin' and turning
Sweatin' from the terror
My body is burnin'
I wake up in cold sheets
Body sore
Sweat drippin'
Should I take it seriously or was I trippin'
It's a dream prophecy
While I'm tossin' and turning
Sweatin' from the terror
My body is burnin'
I wake up in cold sheets
Body sore
Sweat drippin'
Should I take it seriously or was I trippin'
I wake up two days later, bandage on my face
Stomach and waist
Hear 5.0 tellin' motha, I just caught a case
Mother gets pissed, thought I was goin' straight
Now I'm arrested for being in possession of two eighths
I'm sore, I'm hurting
But at least I'm alive
Is it all over or am I in for a surprise
Locked for thirty days, get out on home supervision
Doctor gave me a heavy sedative prescription
For my deep incision
Hit up my homies, tell 'em I'm comin' through
They gonna pick me up
Then tell me what to do
Packin' deuce pistols, I ain't taking a chance
I ain't tryin' to die and do the devil's dance
Shhh is hot
For me on the spot
Gettin' stressed out waitin' for the drop
Or the twelve-gauge
Pop!
It's a dream prophecy
While I'm tossin' and turning
Sweatin' from the terror
My body is burnin'
I wake up in cold sheets
Body sore
Sweat drippin'
Should I take it seriously or was I trippin'
It's a dream prophecy
While I'm tossin' and turning
Sweatin' from the terror
My body is burnin'
I wake up in cold sheets
Body sore
Sweat drippin'
Should I take it seriously or was I trippin'
I wake up sweating and drippin'
Slow motion what I just saw in my last vision
Heat rising in me like horsepower from pistons
Should I watch out for my homies, or me from slippin'
Take my time and breath
And cease
The moment to see
That if I really could tell the future
I knew what would happen next week
Fast forward, press play
And listen to the feelings I had before I died that day
Would ninjas be at my funeral?
Would ninjas stress?
Would my mama be on her knees,
screaming in her cold lonely black dress?
Back up to the minute before I was smoked,
Life sucks, dying
From ninjas hating on you 'cause what they lost you still got: hope
All black Jeep
Dim lights in the street
Car comin' up, slow like a creek
My last night before eternal sleep
Car speeds up
I hear feet running
Rat ta ta tat tat of the semi-humming
Look up, car sped out
Look down
It's my best man
. . . Lights out
It's a dream prophecy
While I'm tossin' and turning
Sweatin' from the terror
My body is burnin'
I wake up in cold sheets
Body sore
Sweat drippin'
Should I take it seriously or was I trippin'
In the dream the faces were blurry
It wasn't me that died, it was my best friend.

-Black Majik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hey this is very deep, and you had us on the edge of our seat. Is this based on a true story 'cause it's pretty gory. It's sad but, this type of tragedy happens a lot. How can you make sure that what happened to your friend, doesn't happen to you? Don't become a victim of the streets. Learn from the death of others; don't learn the hard way. Keep spitting your rhymes you have mad skills to teach and even save lives.

Rehabilitated? (A Conversation Wit' Myself)

Reason: What's up youngin'? You think you ready for them streets?
Doubt: The question is, is the streets ready for me!?
R: Now, why you gotta think like that? Why not try to do the right thing?
D: Come on, you know that ain't me. That ain't what I was put here to do. That ain't my destiny.
R: So yo' destiny is to be either dead or locked away for the rest of your life?
D: Everyone gotta die. Plus, I'm a be smart. I ain't gonna get caught this time.
R: Yeah, you won't get caught if you don't do nothing. Quit that shhh and go legit. You a smart young man, but you do stupid things. Learn from your mistakes and stay outta this place. You're still young, you got yo' whole life ahead of you.
D: Yeah I know, but it's hard.
R: Just give it a try and don't give up. Think you can do that?
D: Nope . . . I know I can. Thanks reason.

-Tru B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a beautifully written conversation. We hope that's how it really went because we love to see reason defeat doubt. Does Mr. Doubt talk to you often? How do you ignore him? Can you explain a time when doubt defeated reason and you wish he hadn't? Thank you for writing such a deep piece. The Beat appreciates it.

I Wish I Never Saw That Night

I wish I never left to my patna's house that night, because like twenty minutes after that, I seen my house on fire and my lil' sister died in that house! So I wish I never saw that.

Till this day, I'm traumatized. And everything ain't been the same since then for my family. 'Cause right now I'm locked up, and I been in and out of jail since then.

People don't know it, but that affected my life in a big way. I ain't been the same person. I've been doin' hella mess. I stopped going to school and started grinding and doin' drugs. All I been doing is smoking purple, sellin' coke and purple, and poppin' stunnas!

It's been a whole lot of stress, especially after the funeral. I didn't know what to do. It seemed like it wasn't real; I smoked myself to sleep.

All I do is think about that night, seeing that blaze of fire, my house burning, knowing that my lil' sister in there suffering! I have flashbacks of that shhh! So, that's what I wish I never saw, 'cause that wasn't cool.

-Young Holla, 150 Crw

From The Beat: It's like your heart got burned up with your house; burned so bad you couldn't stand to feel. You smoked purple till nothing felt real anymore. Marijuana is an hallucinogen, and if reality hurt so bad — you didn't want to feel real. You tried to make your life feel like a dream. They say though, when you run to drugs to avoid the grieving process, you still have to grieve when the drugs run out. Maybe that's what you're doing now, with a clear mind, feeling that loss and pain — feeling that love for your sister in her torment and death. It's like you tried to stop time with drugs, but you have to feel in time, hurt, and still move on with your life. Your sister wouldn't want you here. Your sister wouldn't want everything good in your life to end because her life ended. What you did was natural, but it's just adding tragedy on top of tragedy, because you're not only smoking your life away, you're burning up your freedom. Stay clean, in memory of your little queen, your sister who weeps for you in heaven.

I Wish I Never Saw Or Heard...

I wish I never saw my best friend
Get gang-raped
I wish I never heard of the word
"Molester"
It hurts!
I had to see my best friend
I love her and I want her to know
I was forced to watch
And it's sad because I wish she would talk to me,
So, I understand what she's feeling
Consuela, I love you
And I'm sorry
I wish I never saw or heard
Your screams
Every time I close my eyes
I imagine
Your pain
And the fear in your eyes
I love you Consuela
Remember that
Best friends forever.

-Peaches, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Peaches, our hearts go out to you and your friend. Why don't you send her a copy of this when it gets printed in The Beat and show it to her. Hopefully, it would help her to better understand the situation and your feelings. No one ever deserves to go through what your friend went through and hopefully she will understand and get your support (the support she needs). Powerful piece, keep pushing the pencil, telling your important story.

I'd Talk to Jesus Christ

If I could sit down and talk to one person, it would be Jesus Christ, because it is hard for me to live here. I feel as if I don't belong in a place where I have to face the constant feelings of pain, struggle and loss.

I've always wanted answers to things that cannot physically be explained other than through beliefs and theories. Most of all, I want to know why — why me and so many like me have to suffer? From what I understand, the Almighty God, is to have power over all. Then why make us suffer this hell? Why not take us away from this painful place?

But don't get me wrong. I do not doubt God or disagree with whatever he has in store for us all. I just want to know why. And who better to learn from than Jesus, who has suffered far more than any of us — and for us, for that matter. I would be honored to be granted the blessing of speaking with Our Savior and someone who gave his own life for us all to have ours.

I don't understand how someone with such right intentions could get treated so poorly and still maintain — and still want the best for us, even those of us who wronged him. That is a great power and the true definition of a man. I would give anything to have this power.

Even though I feel I walk with God in my heart, I would still give anything to know such a great man in the flesh. Dedicated to all my Bay folks, stay up.

-Smiley, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are endless debates about what Jesus did or didn't know in the flesh. Some of us find the "only human" belief to be the most moving, for the very reasons you give — that he suffered wrong and maintained right intentions. Did you know Gandhi, though he was a Hindu, based his non-violent political action solely on the model of Jesus! Yet in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to have "this bitter cup" taken from him. He suffered anxiety to the point of sweating blood, while his friends fell asleep! Then accepted God's will, however great the demand. But Smiley, if we could talk to him in the flesh, would we follow him, in the flesh, here and now, no matter what? Regarding your writing, it is only getting better and better with each contribution you submit. What is even more powerful is your courage to step up in class and read aloud your important thoughts.

I Wanna Talk to My Sister, RIP

The one person I would wanna sit down with and talk to, is my sister. September 5, 2004, it will be four years since I've seen her.

That'd be crazy if God gave me two hours with her. I wouldn't know what to say, besides I miss her and I love her, and I'm sorry for what happened — because I wish that never happened!

I would just hold her, show her hella pictures, ask her what it's like to be dead and/or in heaven. To tell the truth, I'd try to kidnap her from God, just so my mama could see her and talk to her. That would be some crazy stuff! You know what I'm talkin' about though.

-Young Holla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! What an incredible piece of imagination, so full of tenderness and love, it doesn't just break a heart — it explodes! And when you put in that part about kidnapping your sister from heaven — we could see the angels enlisting to help, in the name of love! Thank you for writing this. Now for the sake of love, imagine your sister's spirit telling you to get your life together, stop smoking like a train and start using your brain.

I'd try to kidnap her from God, just so my mama could see her

pieces of the week

To The Beat Within

What is it BW? This is the boy, one and only Emmy-Boe, incarcerated over here on the girls' side of one-five-oh. But check this out though — everything I'm about to say is realness, 'cause I would be out of pocket if it was anything different, feel me?

But now I've been in here for … uh, seven or eight months now! I'm about to go to the California Youth Authority any day now! I just turned eighteen in July, so I know it won't be long before I'm gone. I'm in here for three counts of robbery with a firearm. And for this, I know have one strike — and I'm through until I'm twenty-five years old. I got blessed, because I was one decision away from being tried as an adult and doing seventeen years flat in the "Pen".

You know, it's hard for me, knowing that it's over for me! My freedom is gone for a long, long while, feel me? I'm stressed the f— out! But I keeps my head held high at all times. I try my best not to let this sticky situation get the best of me. It ain't easy either. But shhh! What is easy?

Everyday I wake up in this piece of shhh, I grieve within my mind. I wish this and wish that, but I'm missing a personal genie lamp, feel me? 'Cause every day I have the same wish, "I wish I was out!" — But I'm still here, in room nineteen, sitting on my supposed-to-be bed, listening to 106.1 KMEL. This shhh ain't the spirit, wearing the next man's underwear! Looking at sexy females in the latest magazines, fantasizing! Looking at my family and friends in photos, reminiscing! It ain't the spirit.

But the coldest part about this being-locked-up shhh, is: You have to leave behind your family, your friends, your woman, and just loved ones, period; or whatever else it is you have to just leave behind. Yet now that it's already done and over with, there's no need to cry over spilt milk. I just see it like this: It's time to man up, feel me? Do this time; and start over with a fresh clean slate, you know? So while I'm here, the only things I'm interested in, is: the phones, receiving and writing letters, and my visits. Oh yeah, and a good phat three, four, five or six hundred page book to read!

Other than that, I ain't gon' just sit up here and speak so highly of myself — but I'm a boss, and they got me here with hella J-cats! I mean ninety to ninety-five per cent of this unit is L-7's, which = squares! This is not my drink of choice. I'm used to that cold-blooded atmosphere, and this is the total opposite. I'm not knockin' it though, it's just a big dramatic change to me.

But on to some realness. I don't really have a specific point with all that I'm saying, but —man, this foolishness has to stop! I have to man up, and change my ways for the best, you feel? 'Cause I see now that this shhh don't get any better — it only gets worse! And I'm positively sure that CYA is my last stop! I'm way too cool with all this. But I'm out. So, until the next time the paper meets pencil, stay up. Stay solid.

-Emmy-boe, 15 0Crew

From The Beat: In your first paragraph, you promise us realness — and you give us the realest it gets, straight truth from a boss young man with heart and intelligence. You've plumbed the bottom of the truth of the correctional system, juvenile or adult, when you conclude that "it only gets worse." Truer words were never spoken. You say you got accustomed to "that cold-blooded atmosphere" on the street, but it gets cold on cold, colder on colder, the deeper you go down into the belly of this beast. Now you've got to muscle up in your mind, become not just a man, but a new and different kind. You've got to live in the eye of the storm, calm and serene, surrounded by savagery and its shadowy wannabees — and you don't have to prove a thing to any one of them. The critical battle you'll be fighting lies within — yourself, within your heart and mind and soul, as you battle to become newly whole. You've got to become the boss of you; and create a man who emerges from the crucible of the Y, less violent and more in control of his mind. It's an inside job, setting and pursuing goals with the whole of your mind, body and soul. Get that education, but never confuse intelligence with knowledge (you've got more intelligence than many with greater knowledge) — and don't confuse either one with wisdom. Knowledge and intelligence will be your left and right hands, but wisdom must be your head — for you must learn to better understand Emmy-Boe, to be — Emmy-Boe, the new man.

I Wish....

I wish I had a mom and a dad
I wish I had a house
I wish I could be a normal teenager
People say, "You don't know how I feel"
What??
Do you know how it feels at twelve for your
Own mom to kick you out say
"Don't ever come back"?
Do you know how that feels?
Do you know how it feels to get raped?
Numerous times?
Beat, feeling like you're almost dead?
I wish I could go to school
I wish I never did crack or meth
I wish I could have waited before I had my son
I'm only sixteen
A renegade
I wish I never prostituted
Or got gang-raped by turf niggas
I wish someone could visit me
I wish I could have someone to call
I wish people would stop using me
I wish I was normal
I wish my dad didn't hate my mom so much
He probably would've been there for me if he didn't
I wish God could help me
I wish I had a mentor with a strong mind and heart
I wish I had a complete family
I wish God would come from heaven
And hug me, hold me, and tell me at least
Somebody loves me
I wish I could change my identity and be somebody new
I wish I could be anybody
But me.

-Peaches, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Powerful piece! You are an excellent writer. We can feel your desperation and honesty from the heart. But – you are YOU. We love who you are. You really touch people with your stories and knowledge. We believe that everything in life happens for a reason. It really takes someone strong to survive what you've been through. You are a strong young lady, a survivor. How will you let your experiences influence you? Don't let them take you down. You may be in the Hall right now – But this is good. We all need a time-out sometimes. Take this time to reflect on whom you are. Take your list of wishes and see which ones you can accomplish. You can't go back and change the past, but you definitely can shape your future. You can go back to school, you can be somebody new – Who do you wish to be?

I wish I could be anybody but me.

Tip-Toe's Lil' Bit (Part I)

If I could go back, I would talk to my first pimp and I would tell him how he changed my life for the worse and how, because of him, I can't leave hoeing alone. How, because of him I hurt my family and friends, and how I hurt myself.

Turning that first trick changed my life. It brought me into a world of violence, drugs, and self-destruction, but me loving you and wanting to be yo' number one, and only one; I did any, and everything I could to make you happy. Even if that meant selling my soul.

So how do you feel knowing that you messed up my life? Knowing how much I love you and you lied. Telling me that you loved me just to get this money for us, but it was really only for you to put G's in yo' pocket and paying yo' bills. But the truth was, you really didn't give a damn about me! I was a dumb, lil' broad who you used and abused.

You always told me I was your sunshine, your rain, your air, but where are you now? Where were you that night when that trick beat me, raped me, and took all my money?

Remember that night when I called you to tell you what happened? I expected you to say, "It's okay baby. Daddy is coming to get you," but what you said hurt me so deep that I wished that trick would have killed me. You said to call you back when I had some money.

To Be Continued....

-Fireball 150 Crew

From The Beat: Fireball, we all make mistakes but we all grow stronger after we overcome the pain. Also, never blame yourself; it's not your fault. Any man who makes money from the flesh of a woman is far from a man and one day, you will find a man who treats you with the respect and love you deserve. You are a beautiful, strong and a talented writer/person, never settle for anything less than the best. Remember, it isn't the struggle that defines our character, but the way in which we deal with our struggle. Keep writing and releasing your pain; maybe you could help another young person going through the things you've been through.

i love you rest in peace daddy
see you when i come home
until then i'm'a live my life
and rep you in my poems

Rejection

How could you not want me
When I've only made a mistake?
You down who I am
But you drink yourself away
Mr. Saved, drunk off his butt
Stayed with you two weeks
But you said you've had enough
You don't even know me,
But you say you are my father
Anyone can be a donor
But it takes a man to father a child
You want to help me with my child
But did nothing for your own
Sitting in jail for hella days 'cause
I have no place to call my home
You did me wrong
But I pray for your mistakes
People say I get stronger this way
Stressin' in my mind
But in my heart trying to stay strong
Everyday I get weaker
And the little time now seems long
No one has to care for me
'Cause that is still your task
But you never gave a damn
And I'm screwed in the booty
You may not want me
But I'm sure someone does
I wish you'd let me go
So maybe I won't depend on you.

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Imay well written, powerful piece! But it doesn't sound like the problem is that he won't let you go, it sounds like YOU won't let him go. You obviously can't depend on this guy – so leave him alone. It's his loss. It's better not to depend on someone undependable. You are a strong woman Imay! We know that you write about your struggles to get it out of your system, but we also know that you can overcome these – you should know it too. You can depend on yourself and us.

RIP Baba The First: Tydiallmighty's Daddy

i want to sit and have a conversation with my daddy
and ask him why in the world did he want to have me
i was a product of my environment and chose to live this way
but today i'm sittin' wonderin' why my life has straight outplayed
daddy what you doin' in that world so far away
are you lookin' down on me sayin' son it will be okay
i know you see me hurtin' in this hurtful situation
i wanna be with ty'laja but they got me at the station
when they free me i'll be cool and i put that on my life
you know who wants to get married but i ain't ready for no wife
i'm a player till my death 'cause i wanna be like you
except scratch the bullet holes 'cause they burn when they go thru
i love you rest in peace daddy see you when i come home
until then i'm'a live my life and rep you in my poems
(rest in peace baba the first aka daddy)

-Tydiallmighty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can see your daddy in heaven, looking down and grinning, as his son is beginning to break free of the father-to-child chain of suffering and pain that binds generation after generation to daddy's death, dereliction, or incarceration. It's no shame to be born into the game and build yourself a name, gain a reputation and fame, but to remain in as a player when the next generation needs a father's care, when a child falls on his or her knees in prayer, just asking the Father above for a father down here to come home at night and shine the light of a daddy's love somewhere close — oh no! It's time to square up, folks — let a player go ghost, but bring your child's daddy home where he's needed most. RIP Baba the First. We pray your son follows through on his plan to escape the curse.

Pieces of the Week

Love of My Life

Sometimes I wonder how or what would I be if I never met you. In a way I can say you are part of what I am today. I really never knew what love really was until I met you. (Well my love for my family is whole other type for those who might come up wit' the question).

Romance didn't really have a meaning to me until the day I met you, May 11, 2002. Believe me or not, but I still remember what you had on. I knew you was a thug miss because when I met you, you had that lil' ghetto talk. I can say I fell in love on sight. Shhh, a ninja had the funniest feeling that day. On that day, I promised myself that you was goin' to be mine. I seen you and I just knew I had to have you before the next ninja did.

So I went after you and got you. Like the famous words of Julius Caesar, "Vendi, vidi, vinci" (I came, I saw, I conquered). Not that I'm tryin' to make you look like just some other piece I been wit' before, but I knew you was something special.

So after we talked and became friends we started to get close and I asked you out, because I wanted you for myself and because... Well baby, you know why. I don't have to put that in words. I would be exposing secrets that nobody needs to know.

As the weeks became months and the months to a year, I never thought it was goin' to last this long. Damn near three hundred and sixty-five days wit' the girl I learned to call love. Even though we had our ups and downs we still made it through. After all the stormy nights we went through, somehow we always make it to see a sunny day.

I always love the way you get when the heat of passion would take over you . How I would fall victim to your passion. How your face would light up, 'cause you were so happy to see me. I'll keep it real, I couldn't wait to see you because you was that one thing that made me smile. Even if everything was not goin' my way or if I had a bad day.

You are the happiness in my heart. You are the ecstasy that made me feel so good. You one in a million in my eyes. I wandered around the world for many lifetimes to find a love as pure as yours. It's like we lived many lifetimes together, but we can't be separated. We're a pair that can't never be broken. It's like peanut butter and jelly, Pooh Bear and Tigger, day and night.

It's hard to explain how much you mean to me. I said it once and I'll say it again, where would I be without you? I can see how far we have come these last two years together. Seeing how you blend in with my family.

My sister always wants to be wit' you. My brother, who be buggin' you like you was the older sister he doesn't have. My cousins that learned to love and care for you as if you was their cousin. Fightin' over the stupidest things I can think of. To top shhh off, my dear mama. None of the girls that I ever been wit' never got as close to my moms as you have. And I'll tell you that she really cares about you.

So this is how I'll end this lil' line droppin' I just did. There's a lot more in my mind and heart, but I don't want to expose it. You truly are somethin' special, and I believe that we're meant to be. You make me complete in every way, and I love you for it. I want to spend the rest of my life wit' you because you're the friend who became the love of my life.

-Noriega B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It takes a lot of courage for a young man to express how he truly feels about his girlfriend — especially when the piece is as sentimental as the one you've just written. And it sounds like what you and your girl have is worth getting out for. Will you have the same appreciation for her when you get out? How do you know? Could it be possible that you are only saying these things to her because you've been away from romance and you miss it? Or do you really love her the way you say you do? We aren't questioning your sincerity, but we do want to know if that's the way you truly feel.

Life Hurts

In elementary and middle school
A lot of things were new, but everything was kinda coo',
Then gangs were introduced, ya was either wit' the red or blue,
Hella started to bang, others chose not to,
Which can be good or bad depending the way ya look at it foo'
We knew 'bout death but it really had not become a part of us
Till a homie died, then some became venomous
We was already smokin' but then really started to get high,
Smokin' more an' more weed, drinkin' beer and cheap wine.
By seventh grade most of us had been arrested,
In the beginnin' of 2001 wit' more gang task and police
our streets were infested,
Girls couldn't go into the alleys
'cause they was either gettin' raped or molested,
South City PD tripped off us
more than the ones they should have arrested.
By summer, homies were gettin' shot at by our enemies,
Then we post in the cuts but never seen no fifty,
We smashed to they city they was on PC
By now hella girls had been got' pregnant,
Runnin' away wit' unknown boyfriends, hopin' they'll claim it,
Find out, slam her on the pavement,
They tried to save the baby, but never did save it,
It shady but just from here it got worse,
More homies in jail, some in a hearse,
Have me thinkin' maybe my generation is cursed,
Who knows, but this life is full of hurt.

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great rhymes, powerful tale you tell. You talk about a lot of problems in society and the reality of the problems in this world. How can you play your part in making the world a better place to live in? What can you do to avoid an unnecessary death? How can you make sure that your future is one that you want to live? Good luck.

More homies in jail, some in a hearse, Have me thinkin' maybe my generation is cursed

Her Last Breath

I wish I would have never seen my grandmother's last breath. This sight has changed me deep inside.

I wish I would have been smart, just like the rest of my family, and left before her heart stopped — and she ceased to exist! To watch my grandma lie on her deathbed, has scarred me and has been a battle that has wounded me tremendously.

This memory has been burned into my mind, the day of October twentieth, at seven fifty a-m, while me and my grandpa watched helplessly, hoping and praying for a miracle. Thinking of these memories, brings tears of blood from my soul and my eyes.

This immense image was too much for me, but it's too late — there's no taking it back. This image was too much for all the grown men in my family — why should a child have to suffer through this pain?

I never imagined seeing my grandmother pass right before my eyes, but it happened! And now, almost two years later, I still cannot accept it as reality; I still await her coming to see me or being home when I get there. But all that's there, are her pictures and her ashes which haunt me and my grandfather every day.

I imagine the pain I felt in losing her, and I realize it's only a drop in the bucket compared to my grandfather's love lost! I lost a mother and grandmother at the same time; but he lost a wife and lifelong friend — and a part of his soul and heart.

Coping with these images of my grandmother's last breath, is the most trying obstacle I deal with in my life today — and I wish I never saw her take her last breath. In Memory of Ms. Abuelita.

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Such cataclysms of pain as that of you and your grandfather, both present at your grandmother's passing, cannot be compared. Each is infinite! Each of you lost a part of your soul and heart. Do you really believe though, that she ceased to exist? Certainly her heart and lungs stopped, her body and brain died — but is that all your grandmother was? She was also the love she created! And her spirit lives in your heart more surely than it does in her ashes. How do you honor her spirit in your life today? Be the Sho-Moe she imagined you could be, for her spirit is blessing you, if you only will allow it to. You'll feel pain, but don't identify with it. You are more than your pain. RIP Ms. Abuelita.

Always Wishin'

I have always wished I never got a phone call from my pops, and my cousins called me, too, last July 19, 2003: I was in unit B2 when they told me that my cousin had been shot again — and killed this time!

I held in my true feelings till I got to my room. I acted like a man, and asked who, when, and where. They knew the when and where, but not the who yet. I was hella mad and whatnot. I said that I had to go, and I went to my room.

The Guidance Clinic wanted to know what was wrong, and I would not tell them. I went to my room and cried a little and hit the wall a lot.

Those are the words that I wish I never heard before. Stay up, homies and all. I know that most have been in the same situation.

-Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your piece says a lot about the difficulty of handling disturbing, painful, and irreversible news, like the death of a loved one; and your last sentence reminds us of just how widespread this experience is, especially among The Beat readership — 'cause banging is not a life style but a death style. We're willing to entertain the hypothesis that you can still bang without chasing death; but is it true? Can you?

The Game That I Played

It all started when I watched my brothers standin' on our street corner jumpin' in and out of cars. Or the way they used to buy cars, and ride limos. Shoppin' for kicks and clothes, gold teeth and chains. Then it came to me like a song I wrote. And I watched their word play for hours on in. And there it was--the crack hustle. I began to smoke weed with him, but was too young to chill . . .

At the age of 13 I formed my own "infantry," far from a gang. Just me and my family and closest friends were part of the team. So I started with the stealin' bikes, but it became old. So the stealin' car thing was in and so was I. We used to boost cars, mopeds, motorcycles, etc., anything that got us money. After we saved up, we copped an ounce of weed and moved it to two, and so on. Until I realized that I smoked weed, how can I sell it? Took $115 dollars and bought an eight-ball of crack and moved it well with my squad. And we just kept going until we touched an ounce of crack.

We thought we were someone. We began to associate with older dudes who were getting it. So around September of 2001 a friend of 5 years, ran from police and swallowed 20 grams of crack and died. That whole thing had me like WHOA! I thought about quitting but the streets were callin'.

I continued. Around Thanksgiving that year I went to a club midtown with my brother, sister, my stick man Moose (RIP) and friends. After we left this club a friend of mine shot out the window. We were followed home and pulled over at the corner store. I was charged with possession of cocaine and a firearm. After about seven months went by the charges were not processed.

I chilled out for a while. One night a friend and I rented a car and were pulled over. I had a GTA (Grand Theft Auto) charge, and received probation. I chilled went to the Bronx, New York for the summer. Talked to my friend Moose (RIP) the night before I came back. When I returned I was told he was murdered, over a dice game.

He was like a brother to me. So out of anger and rage, I robbed a drug officer's house. I was told on by a cousin and received 18 to 24 months.

So the game I played finally played me back. And I took a loss. It cost me 18 months. At nights while lying down I think to myself . . . why did I play that game?

-Young Buzz, Virginia

From The Beat: An authentic piece of work, and your clincher sums up its essence: "Why did I play that game?" By now, with all those inquisitive nights gone by, you have some good idea of why. Will this new insight into self give you the fresh start that every offender needs once he heads back home? We sincerely hope so . . .

Devil's Games

In the event of my demise
I'll open yo' closet full of deceit and lies
So my options go up while yours get declined
I'll have yo' life dreadful
While mine's divine, if you read the freakin' sign
You'll see I made yo' shhh mine
No lawyers, no dotted lines,
Have you workin' at Century 25
Sellin' Coke and Red Vines
To customers that used to be yours,
but now to them you just another guy
Waitin' for a raise or a bonus
But you can't work diligently,
you spaced, air headed, straight bogus
Watching me drive by in yo' dream car
Lookin' like a superstar
I'm gettin' presents everyday
While you waitin' for Santa Claus
Mad you couldn't pick up a chick at the bar
Wearin' everybody's draws
I watched yo' whole life blow up, then fall apart
Sold yo' soul
No home
Mind in some distant zone
Your only close friend is .38 wit one stone
You close to the end
Balled too intense
Played the devil's games
Now you really got a friend till the end.
This is the devil's view of suicide.
The outsider's view of someone's life before he/she commits suicide.

-Black Majik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are one creative writer. What motivated you to write something like this epic piece? You know, your writing improves each week and we have to give you much props for that. What do you think is stronger — love or hate? The devil or God? Tell us your thoughts. Do you think a lot of people contemplate suicide while they are locked up? Give us more insight. What kind of person are you today from the person you were yesterday?

I Wish I Never Saw...

I wish I never saw my mother put that crack pipe in her mouth.
She felt as though she shouldn't have to hide anything from me,
but it killed me a little bit inside
every time.
Tell me why, mommy?
Don't you love me?
Are the drugs that good that you can't see?
I love you mommy?
Is the crack that good
that you could risk everything
and bring us back to the 'hood?
I cried and begged you to stop,
but time is runnin' out.
All I feel is hurt and pain, and I just wanna shout.
I wanna hug my mommy again and tell her I'm here for you.
I sit and think,
"Did I do something wrong? Is there something I could do?"

-Miniona, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Damn, Miniona, what can we say? Sometimes in life we all face these difficult situations. But you should know that – your mom's drug problem is not your fault. People go through struggles in life and turn to drugs to solve them. But in reality they just create more problems. Why do you think it is so hard for her to stop? Hopefully, you can see the horrible effects drugs have on people, and take a lesson away from all this. It's not your fault.

These Four Walls

These four walls
Condemn my soul
Holds my pride and dignity
My fear
Creeps up to me
My loneliness consumes my heart and time
And I sit behind my door
Looking at my little window
Crying every night
These four walls
Is my pit
Hell
I cry out to God
Wishing
He can take my pain away
My whole in my heart
Helps me dig my own grave
Signed with a "screw you!"
And no one will miss me
The crack consumes my brain
I do not think
"Ho up or blow up"
Rings in my ears
Been hoeing it up for years
What will come of me?
What will I grow up to be?
Maybe right where I am
Behind these four walls.

-Peaches, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Peaches, you may be confined within these four walls, but that isn't the problem. This experience is what will make you or break you. We know it's hard. It's hard to spend so much time with yourself, in your mind. But, this is your therapy, meditation. You need to confront these things in your life. Otherwise, you'll spend the rest of your whole life looking for ways to escape yourself – which will usually get you right back in jail. Now is the time to deal with your pain and anger; your frustrations and depression. If not now, when? We know it's hard, we know it's painful. But if you don't deal with these problems – what are all the new problems you're going to have to deal with? Hopefully you won't have to find out. What will you be when you grow up?

My Dad

I've read some pieces in The Beat about father roles. I personally have never had a good relationship with my dad. He was a raging alcoholic and used to hit me. My mother and I would have to "walk on eggshells" around the house.

I recently got a letter from him saying that he was sorry for all the shhh that he's put me through and that I deserve better.

I love my dad more than he knows and I cried when I read the letter. It really touched me. I'm looking forward to having a good, healthy relationship with my dad. He finally told me that he loved my laugh and that I was his beautiful 16-year-old daughter. I want to go camping with him and be able to talk and relate on things. It's going to take a lot of work, but I am willing to do it. I'm glad that my dad took the first step. I love my dad and I am excited for a new beginning.

-Brooke, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: We're excited for you, too. What will your dad have to do for you to trust him again? What do you want to see him do to be a good father? What do you not want him to do? Can you tell him these expectations?

I love my dad more than he knows

Young Smokey's Philosophy

My race consists of gangbangers, big traffica's,
and small drug dealers,
a bunch of alcoholics, and ya occasional drug addicts,
can I get any realer.
We got a few young political activists
that hopefully will one day lead us
'Cause unfortunately the system is straight beatin' us
Organize up a group and start up a movement
'Cause organized we're strong and anything we'll run through it.
They had the Black Panthers;
well let's start up something like say the Brown Eagles.
Swoop down fast on our prey befo' they sense our anti-evil.
I don't know if I'm saying the right thing,
but I'm trying to do something for my people
'cause I'm tired of police callin' me a spick and a wetback
I'm Puerto Rican, Mexican this is our farmland it time we take it back.
I got a lot of anger, so I want to say pull out the pistols and mini macks
but that would add fuel to their fire, don't want to do that.
I'm sick of living in a dump, pay this white lady outrageous rent,
a bullet just missed me, that's the only blessin' heaven sent.
Everything I write down is never a mistake,
'cause it's what I truly meant.
In my cell thinkin' of my people's struggles and I start to lament,
never see me cry
'cause police beat too much pride into me.
My real name is Lil' Nick
but American streets named me Young Smokey.
Not here to say stop trippin' off raza from other barrios
I'm from a 'hood too down for it
like it the princess and I'm Super Mario.
Guess this leader shhh ain't for me but I would follow though
for the right cause he points and I would go.
They say justice is blind, need to add only two people of color
Unless ya got that color green which make eyes flirtatiously flutter,
The stacks that melt people in seats like butter
If ya got that ya ain't livin' in no gutter,
Like now things are going wrong in the case of Scott Peterson,
He either knew or that foo' did it, but they probably find him innocent.
Enough of that, what 'bout my workers in the valley?
So many on my wall I can't make tallies.
Workin' hella hard, makin' less than minimum wage,
hopin' to one day live the American way.
This county was raised up on a form of government called democracy,
They think we stupid, 'cause it's more like hypocrisy.
But that's the way I see it, this is Young Smokey's philosophy.
And this goes out to Termite.

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Young Smokey you got the right heart and the skill, to spit something raw in the Beat and keep it real. You got a mind of steel and the mentality of a revolutionist, we don't need to give you any tools, you already know and started using this. Just don't follow, be a leader and neva' let up, we already know this government is crooked and the system is sometimes a straight set up. And help yo' people, and try to control your ego, cause nobody's perfect and you could switch up from good to evil!

This county was raised up on a form of government called democracy, They think we stupid, 'cause it's more like hypocrisy.

Been Reborn Twice

What do you see
When you look at me,
A normal young man
Happy as can be?
Let me tell you,
Eyes can deceive
Because I'm in pain/rage/turmoil
Could you believe?
No one can lock the door to my past
For me this pain will forever last
I need to sit down and do some thinking
I need to figure out what I wanna do
I'm gonna stop acting like a fool
There are so many things that I need
I know I can do it because it's up to me
I need to wake up
But I'm so comfortable in life's bed
And if I continue on this path
The life I lead will be the life I led
Life is a challenge
And I can't give up
I'm done looking down
My head's up
I'm ready for a change
Not a change in my name
But a change in my life
I'm ready for a change
No more struggle and strife
I've been reborn twice
Took a gamble with my life
I have to dodge the bullet of self-destruction
Or I feel the repercussions
I will take advice from the ones I love and like
And when I get out I will use it with all my might
'Cause I am strong
And to the weak ones
I'll prove them wrong
I promise I will keep pushin'
No more time for the easy way out cushion
It's time to change my life for the better
It's like this whole time I've been in the cold without a sweater
I'm getting warm, but not hot
Let me go to summer school so I can get taught
I won't mess up, no, not ever again
I think you should understand that from this paper and pen
It's time for respect
It's time to be polite
It didn't start today
But it started last night
To play football is my motivation
Have my family win is my inspiration

-Coda, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Tight flow. You say you're ready to change, that you want to end the struggle and strife, but at the same time, you say you're comfortable in life. Do you need to be more uncomfortable/unhappy to motivate yourself to change? Why is this change so hard? Can you look back in your life and see a change you made for the better? Have you found any ways to deal with the pain of your past: Have you talked to a therapist, a trusted adult? Do you write about it? Cry about it? We wish you luck with building a future you can be happy in.

Thank You For Showing Me

Minutes turn to hours
Hours turn into days
And not much later you realize it's been months
I should've been workin' and payin' the bills
Instead of smokin' dope through my tiny fish gills
From drinkin' to smokin'
To actin' a fool
I shoulda been going to school
I've been comin' and goin'
Now I'm ready to stop hoein'
I got a man
Who's ready to stand
He tells me what to do
But he does it all, too
We are makin' our lives
So I'll never come back
I got a job
Now I'm a college freshman
Wasting year after year
I told you, I will always love you, dear
You told me I could do it
And now I am
You stuck by my side
And didn't let me hide
I love you for you
And all that you do
You helped me get my life together
And for that
I know there will never be another
I love you with all my heart
And I always will

-Jenny, Marin

From The Beat: Your boy friend sounds like he is a good influence on you, if he encourages you to go to college and get a job, Jenny. But are you implying that he also has you doing something illegal, and that's why you're back in Juvy? Even if he's willing to do whatever is also illegal, you're doing your own time, and if you truly want to remain free, can you take the strength and self-confidence you've learned from him and keep going without him? If you have to go it alone, to stay out of Juvy, can you do it? Also, don't you think you should beware of people who try to tell you what to do? You're very smart — you know what to do, right?

Leaning Toward Change

It's so many things floating around in my head. On one hand, it's how I'm going to get out and change my lifestyle — do something with myself. I know I could go to college if I wanted to. Damn near every test I take I'm damn near scoring high as hell — almost perfect.

So it should not be hard to change, but then on the other hand, I want to get out and go back to what I was doing out on them streets. It ain't hard to go back to the streets, because that's what you know, but it's hard to change your life and do something with yourself.

That's why I want to do it, because it's a challenge to change and go to college and be somebody. That's what I'm leaning towards change because it's a challenge to do.

-Leek B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope your lean towards changing for the better becomes a jump. It is challenging to do the right thing and that's why so many people aren't doing what they're supposed to be doing. Are you up for the challenge? What can you do to change that lean into an all out jump? Hopefully it happens sooner than later. In the meantime, keep us posted because we want to know how this turns out.

It ain't hard to go back to the streets, because that's what you know, but it's hard to change your life and do something with yourself.

Interview Wit' Weasel And Louie

Louie: Today wit' a second interview as the 'hood turns. You dig! We is goin' to talk about what's goin' on out there. So what's really good?

Weasel: Ya know what it is, still locked up finishing up this eighteen month bid. I'm a touch down next month.

L: So now that you is goin' to touch down soon, what do you plan on doin'? You know things have changed these last eighteen months you've been down. And from what I hear out there, stuff's poppin' off in the 'hood!

W: I know thangs have changed out there and I got my plans ready to do something positive but living in the middle of a war zone brings the negativity.

L: It's a war zone out there. And it's good that you got plans ready fo' yo' self. Do you think the negativity will drive you to the war zone. Would you just end up doin' the same ol' stuff you was doin'? That's the stuff that got you wrapped up — remember that.

W: I live through adversity and I been doing it my whole life. Only I could drive myself into the war zone out there in my neighborhood. If I misguide myself that way I'll end up doing the same ol' stuff. I never make the same mistake twice. I gamble with life and hope I don't crap out on the dice. I guess there's something I'm a have to sacrifice to keep myself out and living 'cause being here ain't living.

L: I dig your style, kid. It's time to change the old ways and make somethin' out of nothin'. Life is only lived once. We don't get a second chance. It's time to live life in peace. Where there's no cops jackin' us or hittin' us up. Like Pac said, "Do what you got to do, but know you got to change and find away out the game." Do what you do kid... The world is yours and everything in it!

W: I'm just trying to live my life and not die young. I got too much to give back to my Latin community before I go. I'm keepin' it cool until then. Michael says I got one foot in and one foot out the game, but I say I got them both in trying to survive in the game through adversity. Wish me the best. That's all folks. It's a wrap.

-Weasel And Louie B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Hopefully your desire to give back to your Latin community will be enough to keep you out. How do you plan on giving back? What's influencing you to stay in the game? What game are you actually playing? You don't have to answer any of these questions — we're just trying to get you to think.

Life Like Suicide

Part One

livin' life like suicide
neva know when it's time to die
got to stay up on the grind
in the dodge doing crimes
or in the county doing time
bangin' out that nickel and dime
big bad east bay on mine
never in my life drop dimes
show my pain through the rhyme
roll a dollar do a line
pull the trigger watch him die
every night before you lie
you see the white up in his eyes
hear his family when they cry
relive the stress when i ride
numb the pain when i'm high
get revenge when i cock the slide
run up on him from the side
watchin' out for who's behind
pull the trigger let 'em fly
i do this all for my pride
we all push pull and strive
live with people tellin' lies
no excuse to stay behind
so until my soul starts to rise
and reach the heavens in the skies
it's gonna be ride or die
forever hold it down for mines

Part Two

it was a trip when you first let the pistol smoke
but wakin' up in the county ain't no joke
it's murder one 'cause his crime was premeditated
he thought it out on the trigger never hesitated
cuff the book his fate is now sealed
a thirty with an 'L' is the deeay's first deal
you ask yourself what the hell kinda deal is that
with that much time there ain't
no chance i'll ever make it back
without a doubt not guilty was the youngsta's plea
put the decision in the hands of the jury
a bunch of snitches climbed up in the witness stand
fingers pointin' while the judge said who's the man
is he seated in the courtroom here today
the deeay smiles when they pointed at him right away
they want to handle it by climbin' in the witness seat
instead of gettin' strapped and holdin' court in the streets
deliberation by the jury took a bow today
a guilty verdict made a longass prison stay
his mom cried when the judge said life without
because she's knowin' what that soldier's life's about

-Young Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Soldiers in a war without end — watching young men die, enemies and friends. Trained in diapers red or blue, to hate on a diaper different from you. In the name of the father, the son and the next one to be done, a war for drug turf goes on and on — ride and die if you belong, whether you slang or don't. To hold court in the street is that what you want? Born in prisons, Norteño and Sureño rival gangs, condemned to death on the installment plan — as if you'd been hypnotized by the devil. On the level, how many innocent must die for what you call pride?

i wish never saw my friend get killed

Thru God's Eyes

what god sees when he looks at me
is a lost soul that can't be saved
he sees a man that's turned his back on him
a man of no faith in his power
who no longer cares
about consequences or repercussions
a man who walks his own path blindly
a man with a tormented soul
and a tortured body
he sees a new judas
a disciple who sold him out
who's given up on life
he sees a man filled with anger
anguish agony despair
who's been broken into pieces
by the pains that came his way
he sees a hollow vessel
a man with no feelings
a man with his strength depleted
but his will still intact
still fighting a battle of meaninglessness
fighting battles against the wrong person
a man that knows his place in life
and that strives to see better days
a man with an angel looking over him
an angel beside him
a man that wants a simple life
but is aimless with his ambitions
who settles for less than he's worth
god sees a man led astray by his pains

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say you're a Judas, selling Jesus out to die on the cross. Your grandmother was your Jesus, and her death broke your heart and destroyed your faith. Yet far from selling her out, you prayed to die in her place! That was anything but aimless. And it is only meaningless as long as you refuse to see, though you cannot die in her place, you can live your life in a manner worthy of her life and her love for you! If you continue to walk blindly, it is not your path, though it may be the crucial moment in which you must find a path out of the darkness of your despair, anguish, agony and anger. None of these emotions are sins; we see them all in the life of Jesus (who, by the way, was not a white man). Yet none of them were the source of his power, that power which survives death, injustice, unendurable pain (Jesus cried out on the cross, "God! Why have you forsaken me?"). And what is that divine power that stretches beyond the grave? Love. And where is its power manifest? In your thoughts and actions. It is where your grandmother's spirit survives, if you will but give it life — let her love come back to life in you! Be there for you grandfather, too! Feed love, and not hate, in you.

JJ Died

i wish i never saw the evil
i wish i never heard the voices
i wish i never saw the devil
i wish i never heard the stupid life
i wish never saw my friend get killed
i wish i never heard the words
— j j died

-Lost one, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Stop listening to evil and turn your back on the devil. Forget that stupid life, it's the reason JJ died. But the lost can be found, so turn your life around.

When God Looks Down

When God looks down
He sees me on a mission working nonstop
reaching the top is my intention
no more falling i am awake at last
He sees me trying so hard
to escape my past
He sees me under the road over the skies
and other than I He's the only one
who knows what I hold inside
When he looks down He sees my path to aim
and all my ways
I got the choice
only I can change

-DD man Granville, Virginia

From The Beat: You've made a pact of some sort with the Lord and your confidence soars, along with the language that you "aim" with. With belief in His power and your own, there is hope for your future. Make it happen day by day.

What's The Point?

Well, today my point is I just got off lockdown – 23 hours a day in my room. Just being bored and working out. Same crap still going. People playing games that I'm not liking.

I've got to put an end to this stuff. It feels good to be out of my room and in general population. Feels good to kick back with the homies – under the warm sun that we have here. The sun breaks through and makes me feel good. I reminisce about kicking it in the 'hood.

The question I have is: why am I the only one here for a crime that others pulled? Lookin' at two strikes. Damn, this is a bad habit I've got. I've got to prove to the judge who stands before me. He asks for the story of how it really went down. When I look down I see the seeds on the ground. Seems like I just got played. I go back to my room for the rest of the day. I only got an hour out today. I'm hoping for better days.

-Ezequiel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We hope for better days for you, too. Keep reading and keep writing. Maybe this was a warning for you to watch out who you hang with. In the mean time, how can you make the best of your situation? How can you make sure that you don't fall into the same predicament in the future?

This Isn't A Waste

I feel that being in Juvenile Hall is not a waste of time, because I feel that I need this time to realize this is really where I don't want to be, so it's time for me to change and not do the things that get me here.

And I've also been thinking about how in two years I am going to be eighteen, and committing crimes will get me in jail, so I decided that I would rather be in college or work on a trade so I can make good money and make a better future for myself.

-Roderick B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Very smart thinking, Roderick. Do you know what you need to do to get into college or a trade school? If not, we're happy to give you all the advice we can and to hook you up with folks who have more knowledge and services than we do. We have leads on scholarships and financial aid. Have you thought about what you might like to do for a career? Think about it and get back to us.

What My God Sees

When my God looks upon me
what does He see?
He sees a young P.I.M.P. trying to manage
what he wants to be
He is loving and caring
in the gentlest ways
and He helps me pass through these miserable days
and listens when I say that
when He looks upon me
He sees a reflection of Himself
in the eyes of my own God
So my God looks at me
tells me who I might be
'cause life without a purpose or end
can lead down that devilish bend

Send me an angel and
send me your ears
'cause you can be who you want to be
and you ain't gonna follow those troublesome peers
So baby girls and baby boys, dry your eyes and
wipe those tears
there's no need to cry upon lost years
Your God supports you in every way
even when in prayers you might not
have something to say
just thank Him for the beautiful days
As you ask again about what your God sees
His response will be "Whatever
makes you happy is good enough for me!"

-Lil Souljah, Virginia

From The Beat: This is about as upbeat as it gets. You've got yourself invested in a relationship that many people just can't nurture consistently–or so it seems. Build on the beauty of your faith with deeds that are wise and loving.

The Day My Cousin Got Shot

I wish I never saw the day that my cousin got shot. That day will stay with me forever.

Me and my other cousin and his baby'mama, went to go pick up my cousin, Sonny, at a party in Stockton on September 18, 1999. When we got there, there was hella people outside, and I seen my cousin outside talking to some girls — I never knew what about.

We were outside of the car, and my cousin, Sonny, was on the side of me. All I heard was a loud noise — then I seen my cousin hit the ground! The last words he said was, "Make sure my son is healthy." Then he died. Rest In Peace: Sonny; 9/19/78 – 9/18/99.

-Sad Girl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes your true-life stories make very clear why you call yourself Sad Girl. You've witnessed too many deaths and too much pain. Pardon us for asking, but — where is Sonny's son today? Keep your head up.

The last words he said was, "Make sure my son is healthy." Then he died. Rest In Peace: Sonny; 9/19/78 – 9/18/99.

When He Looks at Me

When the Man looks at me
I'll tell you what he saw
another one confused
all mixed up in this world
like a soldier who has fallen
and is stumbling behind
like the old lady who slipped
and can't get up
wondering why a man like me
'cause me knowing what I know
and doing what I do
has differents like night and day
'cause I'm real smart
but still so dumb
so when He looks at me
He sees that I'm still young

-Bizzy, Virginia

From The Beat: You've sent a seamless message that comes across as "up close and personal." You don't spare yourself–a good sign. You ARE still young, and the "real smart" side of you needs all the good options it can find. Your similes ("like the old lady who slipped," etc.) give your poem all the emphasis it needs.

Gracie

First and foremost, I'd like to give a shout out to Senorita Gracie. She's not just the Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall cook, but a good friend to all of us here behind these walls — so here goes…
home made posole, 'mole,
carne asada,
chicken tostadas, salsa,
tortillas and tamales.
Can't forget the lasagna and spaghetti with the homemade French bread.
Cookies and creampuffs, orchatas
And watermelon lemonade.
These are just some of the things
Thursday through Monday at dinner we come to crave.
Gracie, I know you're on vacation right now.
It's well earned and deserved.
I hope you're having fun, but please come back soon.
I haven't eaten dinner since you've been gone.
Well, on behalf of the Santa Cruz County inmates and staff, I'd like to say – Thank You for making this place a lil' more like home.
Much love.

-Ishmael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a lovely and a loving letter. We are all proud of you for taking time to offer thanks to someone who means so much to all of you. Show her a copy of this when it gets printed. It will bring a smile to her face.

From Myself To A Young Lady, And Back Again

In the past year I've changed from the inside out. I spent 9 months in a group home in Visalia. It was extremely hard to be so far away from home. And it was hard on my mom having to come get me every weekend. But it was all worth it. I learned manners. I learned structure, and I learned how to be a young lady.

For the 4 months I was out, I was doing great, then I started slipping back into my old ways because it was comfortable to me. So in the last 13 months I've changed from a girl running the streets, to a young lady, then back again. Now I'm going to try to complete drug court, so in 10 months I can successfully get off probation.

-Katie, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Tight goals. We're sure you can do it. We wonder how you're going to stay clean when you're back home, because it's easy to slip back into old ways. Since you've been through it before, do you have any ideas, plans on how to hold onto the things you learn and keep changing for the better?

What He Left Behind

I knew some kid; he looked like nothing ever bothered him.
He could wrestle everybody on the block and always win.
He wasn't a perfect angel, but still he would try not to sin.
Stronger than most, he had a lot going on inside him.
He had a hard life.
He hung himself at the age of 14, never knowing how it would have been to have kids and a wife.
Never did he pick up a weapon like a gun or a knife, Always quick to put up his fist at times he was pissed.
He left a lot of people behind.
It's too bad that you just can't press rewind.
He left so much and his mother to cry.
Now whenever I'm drunk and buzzin'
I think about that kid; he was my cousin.

-Miguel, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: How sad, Miguel. We wish someone had been able to help your cousin feel less desperate. Does thinking about your cousin's early death ever make you think that you should try to make your life as happy and free as possible in honor of him? Has his situation taught you that talking about your issues is better than holding them in and pretending that everything's good?

Now That I Think About It

Well, right now in Juvenile Hall, I'm trying to change myself so that I'll better me for the future 'cause now that I think about it, if I maintain the same game, I'll be stuck with the mindframe of a convicted felon.

The one person I wish I could talk to is my father. I haven't seen him for almost ten years. I feel bad sometimes when I see other people getting love from their pops 'cause it makes me think that if I had a positive influence, would I still be same person that I am now? But it makes me stronger to know that all I've been through without having a dad to teach me certain responsibilities that I'm still living to this day.

-Young Brilla B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Good insight, Young Brilla. How will you change your mindframe and what do you need to change it to — student, employee, good son, excellent role model? We're sorry to hear about your dad not being there for you. Can you get in contact with him? Do you think he would be a good influence on you now?

I knew some kid; he looked like nothing ever bothered him.

Does Anybody Really Care?

It's not that no one will listen, but it's just that I really don't think that anybody that's available to listen right now really cares. Like they will act all interested, but I feel like when I'm done telling them how I feel — like real personal stuff — and I'm done crying, or something, they just leave. I realize that it's their job to make us feel comfortable, but I'm going through some tough stuff right now and often I'm in my room alone crying. Like last night, I just needed somebody to hold me.

I don't know! I feel lame, but I don't really know how I should feel right now. I'm scared, sad, mad, curious . . . I realize that coming home at a certain time is part of my probation, but I haven't been here since March and I haven't done anything illegal (drugs, alcohol). I've totally done a 360. I'm doing so good and now since I didn't come home for curfew, I got put in here. I was supposed to get off probation on October 8 and now they're extending my probation and sending me to a foster home.

In my opinion, they're taking this a little far. I just don't understand?! There has got to be a reason behind all this, and I wish I knew it, but I honestly don't. I keep asking why, but they just change the subject like they didn't hear me or something. I'm very disappointed and sad, mad, curious, but I guess that everything happens for a reason. I just don't know the reason behind this one yet.

-Waiting, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: That's a good way to look at it — that this not-cool thing is happening for a reason. Have you seen this before in your life — how certain things have worked out, even thought they seemed so bad at the time? At the same time, part of finding a reason is making the best out of what life throws at you. What can you do to make this turn in your life a positive thing? Will you let it give you a reason to start messing up again, or will you use it to motivate you to work even harder? We hope you find someone who listens and cares, we do.

More and More RIP

What's up Beat, this ya' boy Tru and I got a little concern. I been reading The Beat now for nine months and every issue I see more and more RIP's.

I just wanna ask somebody to please tell me what's going on. Why are we out there killing our own? Why would we rather see one fall before we see them ball? The number of RIP's at the end of people's pieces is becoming outrageous. I just wanna say to everyone be safe. Get out the game if you could, 'cause the game ain't ever played fair.

-Tru B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We couldn't agree with you more! It seems like everybody knows somebody who has passed away. We're glad you recognized it and have a big enough heart to speak on it. Do you have any RIP's? Do you think all this killing will ever stop? What's the cause of all the killing?

Why are we out there killing our own? Why would we rather see one fall before we see them ball?

Someday

Some days I sit inside my cell,
wondering if I will go to hell.
I don't know what to do
just so that I can talk to you
to tell you that you're not the one
for us to go other ways
to go along with our own days
Someday I will be smart and tall
although you would be so small
Even though I was left behind
I know I would be in your mind
We were friends to the end
Well the end is here
I wanted you to respect me
to cherish our moments and to love me
like you would family
You deserted me when I needed you most
You were like my toast
You get there, then you're gone
So much gone in so long.

-Amber, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Oooh, being let down is an ugly feeling. Sometimes you see it coming and sometimes you don't. Did you see it coming in this situation? What can you do in the future to try to see it coming? Can you do things differently so that you aren't so let down? Have you ever let anybody down by breaking their trust and friendship?

My Dog

Man, I thought you was a dog
That real cat that would ride out like all my hawgs
Thought you was my dad
But you nothin' but a punk
A back-stabber, a hater, a natural-born snitch
Always having diarrhea of the jaw
Running, hopping and skipping to the law
You got me blurped
You held me down
But when I get out
I'm a be the king wit' the crown
I don't love you no more
I don't even care for you
And as for my mom, you ain't shhh
But a drug-user and abuser
You pretend to love and hug me
But don't ever speak to me again
Or I might hit you wit' one to the jaw
And three to the chin
For those who don't know, I'm Young Slick
Black Boy, 'cause I'm here to sit
If you don't like my words
Rewind yo' life
But you probably can't resist poems
Sharper than a double-edged knife

-The Slick One, Marin

From The Beat: What has your dad done to you that made you hate him like tyhis? Do you mean he turned you in to the authorities? If you're as fed up with your parents as you write you are, do you intend to live with them again, when you get out? If not, where will you go? If you want to live with them until you're ready to move out on your own, how can you create an atmosphere that will make life with your parents fun, or at least tolerable? Are your parents making an effort to help you, guide you through life? Many parents make huge sacrifices for their kids. What about your parents?

Ariana

I miss my sister, Ariana
I miss my whole family
But it's my Ari who has gone from me
The longest
She's so beautiful
Words just can't explain
With such a kind heart
It shines like a candle in the dark
I've been sad since we've been apart
I've looked up to her from the start
She's talented in so many ways
She does everything with perfect grace
So a mi hermana (So my sister)
Que tiene la sonrisa de angelita
(Has the smile of a little angel)
I miss you so much
Without you me siento tan solita
(I feel so alone)
I hope to see you soon
Because your presence shines brighter than the moon
To Ariana, a wonderful sister and friend

-Sad Eyes, Marin

From The Beat: Where is your sister? Do you live together on the outs? Does she know you're in Juvy? Can she visit you? Why don't you send her some of your incredibly beautiful poems you've had published in The Beat Within? You're amazingly talented, too! Send her this poem! It would bring a smile to her face! PS, ask her to come and visit you!

All The Pain

I wish I never saw all the pain I went through as a young kid. I had to see how my mother and father go their own ways. I really didn't understand what was goin' on at the time. I was just five years old.

I really don't remember, but the next thing I know is that I'm at my aunts house not knowin' where moms was. Just to find out and see that mom was doin' cocaine and drinkin' because she was so stressed out. I would be held back from moms for a while. I wish I never saw that.

-Noriega B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Now you've painted a picture that we wish we would've never seen. It was a well-written piece, but it was so well written that it saddened us. We're sorry you had to go through such hardships, but we know you're a strong person and will succeed regardless. Keep your eyes to the sky and remember that our struggles help our character grow. This means you're a mature young man.

Time To Think

They say being in juvenile hall is wasted time, because you're locked up and can't do anything that you want to do. Well, that's true, but to me it's just time to think because sometimes you're so caught up into other things like slanging, drinking, or other stuff that you don't have time to think or reminisce about things or girls.

So, to me, it's not really wasted time 'cuz if you're using your brain you're never wasting time and it also gives me a chance to get away from all those things that could get me in trouble — even though I'm already in trouble. So basically, the only thing that's wasted is my chance with meeting new females.

-Baby J B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a different perspective on the 'wasted time' topic, but it's a perspective we're feeling. Basically you're saying that your environment shouldn't be the only factor that determines what you're doing. That everybody should have power over their own minds. How were you able to maintain control of your situation in a place where you have now power?

My Thoughts

Yeah, I asked myself what I could've done with all the time that I've been in jail, things I could've done in school and stuff like that, but I love the block!

Many of the kids in YGC don't have positive role models. Maybe they don't have people in their lives doing something productive. Like in my situation, I never had people to show what's good. All the things they showed me was what you mentioned in the topic question. But back to the question, most likely I'd be in school focusing on cars, 'cause I love cars.

-Pato B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Thanks for the honesty. What do you love about the block? Have you met anyone there who's been able to show you "what's good"? Can you imagine focusing on cars and leaving the block alone, at least for a while, just to see what your life could be like?

They're Wasting My Time

This is a waste of time right now. I've been down for hecka long and I still don't know what's going to happen with my damn case. In Juvenile these "white people" just sit you down in jail and when they want to deal with you that's when something changes. And I do mean white people, so if you don't want to put my piece up there with the writers because of that statement, I don't care because that's how I feel.

My time is being wasted right now. They, meaning the court, be poppin' that innocent 'til proven guilty stuff, but still have you locked up if you did it or not. I could be doing something with myself right now and still going to court on my case, but that ain't what's going on.

I'm locked up wasting my youth. I'm trying not to have all this time being wasted by trying to learn stuff, but I still feel my time is being wasted.

-Leek B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like being in jail is getting you hella angry because you feel like you're wasting your time. That part we understand. However, what we don't understand is how your anger towards a couple of people can make you angry at a whole race. Have you ever met a white person that wasn't out to get you? Well hopefully you'll be able to see where you went wrong because it's not wise to correct someone else without correcting yourself first.

All This Time

All the time we waste in jail — just think what we could do good, like getting money the right way, giving respect to others and myself. I do all this bad, for what? Life is too short to waste. If I'm going to waste it, it will be on something good. We have wasted so much time being bad. I will give good a try.

-William B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is beautiful, William. How will you start giving good a try? Get a legal job? Go back to school? Can you even start while you're in the Hall, treating others, and yourself, with respect? When things are going bad, how can you keep on the right path?

I Wish I Never Saw Or Heard

I wish I never saw a friend of mine die right beside me. I was with him most of the day. This day — I was with him every day 'cause we was from the same place, just 'cause he dead I ain't gone say we was best friends but he was cool, my homey.

But the night he died we was at a party that went crazy. We got into with some other dudes and they come back shootin'. My homey gets shot right aside of me. I think about this all the time, how it could have been me. He took one for me or he died because of me.

All these thoughts pass my head. It wasn't supposed to happen. He wasn't no beefin' dude, he was just cool, funny — not a problem starter, but he died. RIP Scharod.

-Tails B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Keep him in memory and learn from this experience — unfortunately these kinds of things happen too often due to the lifestyle some of us live. We are sorry to hear what happened, and use this tragedy as the spur to re-examine your life choice, people you hang out with.

Mustard and Collard Greens

I was about five years old, and my daddy had some weed in a small plastic see-through bag, along with a small piece of paper and a razor of some sort.

I asked him, "Daddy, what's that?" I knew whatever he had, wasn't gonna bring no good if it wasn't candy or toys. He told me it was mustard and collard greens. And a new look came upon his face, a sneaky, humorous, evil grin.

But he let the wrong word slip out when my mom asked him what it was. It was weed. And he's still smoking them same old collard and mustard, green weeds.

-Lil' Momma J, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You wrote a short, short story. One of the shortest we've ever published — and one of the best! This is just an amazing story; simple, insightful, and scary. That "new look" scares the five-year-old girl, and, though its evil is not yet spelled out by the story's author, it scares the reader, too, for the girl's sake.

When My Cousin Died

I wish I never heard that my cousin had died. I loved him a lot. He left a lot behind.

On December 31, 2003, my family called from Colorado, and they said his wife had found him early in the morning — laying on the ground unconscious! He died later at the hospital!

I was so upset and sad. A year before he died, he drove out to California and visited me. We went to San Francisco and went to the pier and rode the ferry. A couple of years before that, my family and I drove out there and visited him. He took us to the go-carts and to the water-slides.

We have had so much fun together. I miss him and love him. I wish I never heard that he had died.

-Lil' Mike, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In ancient times, monarchs would kill the messenger who brought such news — that's how much they hated to hear it. Yet it's the reality and not the hearing of it that we really hate. And your family called you because they love you and know you care, too. Death, especially untimely death, is so cataclysmic and final — never again to see in the flesh one you love! And all those happy memories, stained by loss and pain.

Do What I Got To Do

Just had my family visit. There was a lot of people from my family there: gram, gramps, aunt, moms, lil' 'cousins, lil' bro and sis. The person that gave me the best feeling there was my girl. She was too nervous to meet my fam' alone so she brought her friend.

I walked in — my breath was stolen from my lungs, and I wasn't hungry any more. I gave kisses and hugs to every person in there. I sat next to grams, gramps, and little cousins, but most of the time with my girl.

After a couple minutes she sat on my lap, happy and sad at the same time, She didn't talk about the time I'd be gone, it's just too long to be separated from each other.

I was already happy that I was leaving, then I held her in my arms . . . I didn't want to let go. Had to let go after my PO finished searching my bag. Kissed her goodbye first and last. She's my special woman.

Now that I'm leaving tomorrow, I'm glad I'm closer to home — then think, can't I just go home? I do want to better my life instead of getting deeper into the game. Now tomorrow when I set foot on plane it's over, I'm doing what I got to do.

-G-Man B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Thanks for dropping pieces on us all these times. Hopefully the thoughts of the love you have from your family and your girl will keep you motivated to keep doing what you've gotta do. What is it that you've got to do? What sacrifices will you have to make in order to better your life?

I Wish

i wish i never heard about people dyin'
out here in the streets of oakland
baby'mamas and baby'daddies goin' through
commotion
and all the potnas on the turf
don't know nothin' but hustlin'
too lazy to go to school
but real quick to hit up the function
now i wish i never saw
people homeless on the streets
and if i could then i would
give them all something to eat
it's kind of hard to express myself
while i'm up in this hell
so i grab a few sheets of paper
and i hit up the beat

-Dezel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad you pick up a few sheets of paper and hit up our readers with what you want to say for yourself. It's good for your mental health, and ours, too, 'cause you're not the only one who feels that mess on the street is not coo'! Why are they so lazy? Is it the weed and the drink? What do you think?

**and all the potnas on the turf
don't know nothin'
but hustlin'**

It All Started At a Young Age

Well, it all started back in '98, when I was about eleven years old. I started bangin' because — I wasn't sworn in it but I was born in it!

Bangin' and slangin' is in my family's bloodline, and it runs through my blood, like water runs through a river. But I've walked in those shoes ever since I started to kick it with the homies in the 'hood, pulling licks and doing other hot stuff like that. I always ran them Oakland streets, from a young age.

Well, there ain't no good side to my life, because everything that runs through my veins is evil and hate. Why? Because ever since I was brought up in this life, I was treated like I was nothing. So I was like, "Forget everything and everybody!"

Well, anyway, this life I was living, and still do live, is an everyday struggle, because every day on the streets is a war. But that wasn't the struggle! The struggle was to survive and eat. So me and my brother stuck together, and he was showing me the life to live. So I started to live the life he was livin' an' showing me how to live at a young age.

Well, now I just turned sixteen years old the other day, and I still can't stop. And you know what? I won't stop until my casket drops. Well, I'm out. Late.

-Lil' Augie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your piece is honest and real, but then you snap it shut like the lid to a coffin in the end. And in your coffin is exactly where we don't want to see you, young friend! Believe it or not, we feel you, on the struggle to survive and eat; and following your brother into the street, then, makes a lot of sense. But today, now there are others ways you can make pay, at your age. You're old enough now to look for and find, a job. That doesn't mean walking out on your partners, it just means when you walk out of here,you won't have to come back! We don't believe you're all "evil and heat" — that's not what you are in the eyes of The Beat, and we see you every week.

Wasted Time's Gotta Stop

wasted time is spending time
at the hall behind bars
oh no the doors with no door knob
and then for that time not to count
man that's what a waste of time no doubt
but hey it's a white man's world this system
we gotta learn to play it or live with it
or we're gonna go broke 'cause of it
wasted time is being incarcerated
because you not only do time but you pay
cash for it — wasted — time
i've wasted two to three years of time
coming in and out and it's gotta stop
stay safe and stay out

-Lil' Jose, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We see whites locked up, too; poverty comes in all shades and hues; but still, we feel you. So if you're brown, you can even less afford to clown around with your freedom; 'cause you're more likely to get stopped, pressed and stressed, even when they don't arrest. So get back in school, plus get a job for your pay, too; then you won't spend all day and night getting drunk and high, and you won't be tempted when some fool wants to ride for no good reason but to start funking season — and you won't be behind locked doors 'cause you got drunk and bored.

Nineteen

Nineteen, it's such a small number.
It's small if you don't have to stay away
from home until you are nineteen.
Well, to me, nineteen is a big number.
To me, nineteen is a number I fear now.
I don't like to fear stuff. Nineteen
is too long for me to stay away
from home and from my dog.

-Brent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Words swell with meaning like helium balloons, dragging us to dizzying heights from which we fear to fall. Take it one day at time. Don't look too far ahead. Don't fall. Then one day you'll be nineteen and home with your dog; that's all.

That Person

There is always a person I would like to sit down with and talk to, but not always do I get that chance.

The person I would like to talk to most is the judge. It seems that every time I go to court I get rejected for a release due to the judge thinks that I am a criminal still, and don't want to change.

After two and a half months I think that I've made enough self-adjustments and want to straighten out my life. Unfortunately for me, the judge doesn't know that, because he hasn't taken the opportunity to sit down and listen to me on a one-on-one basis.

On the other hand, if I was allowed to sit down with the judge I would converse with him about my goals and long-term life plans and include how my past has affected my thoughts and actions and that I'm aware of the consequences for my wrongdoings. So all I want to do is talk with the judge, "that person."

-D-Minus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: D-Minus, we feel ya'. It's hard to maintain in the Hall when you got something to say, and the person you want to tell, NEED to tell won't listen. We believe that you've learned your lesson. We know that you're a smart guy. Just take this as another life experience that you can learn from – develop your patience. Your day will come. You know it and we know it. Be patient.

This Horrible Place

I wish I never saw this horrible place called Juvenile Hall. This was the biggest mistake I ever made, because it has really changed my outlook on life. I feel that I would be doing something very productive if I weren't in here, and I would be living my life in an according manner.

I really wish I never saw this place! All these people in here are really getting on my last nerve! They're hella messy and fake; and always wanna be like the next person. I just can't wait until the day I walk out these Juvenile Hall doors. I wish I never saw what I've experienced for the last nine months! RIP Lil' Jeremee.

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know it's been a rough go for you in the Hall, but we've seen you grow in maturity and self-control. We hope it carries over into your life of freedom, so that you'll never be back in a place like this ever again. Stay chill for now.

So all I want to do is talk with the judge

Wasted Time

I was at Highland Hospital five days ago to pick up some of my homegirl's stuff who was a patient there. I got lost on the way 'cause it was a big hospital.

I spoke with security and employees for directions, and I still got lost. When I heard a sound on a deserted floor I jumped under a desk because I was afraid I wasn't supposed to be where I was.

Turns out it was two sheriffs and they arrested me because of the way I look and my background record. They thought I was a gang member off the bat, because I was bald and Hispanic looking, but I'm Filipino. They didn't fully investigate the arrest, by not checking cameras and questioning witnesses like the employees and the security I spoke with.

I'm gonna be doing a lot of time, because I'm on probation. They gotta ship me to my county first, in Los Angeles. I was just in the Bay Area to visit my grandma and grandpa.

I'd rather be with my mom right now, I was supposed to go live with her again when I got back from vacation, (sigh).

-Phillip, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are in a tough situation. Well, you options are either' you can let this experience piss you off, and go dumb – and spend a longer time in the Hall. Or you can just ride it out – your time while soaking up as much knowledge as possible, while preparing your self for the day you get your freedom back. We know that you must feel angry about it. But anger is okay. Use that energy into something productive. Do push-ups. Read. Write. Strengthen yourself. You body and mind. You're a smart guy, and that's the smart thing to do – what do you think?

You Can Be Like Me

you can be just like me
or you can be like yourself
the only difference is you're on the bottom
and i'm sittin' on the top shelf
you can be like me and that's called livin' like a boss
quick to smash and tell a loser to get lost
you can be like me and be nothin' less than a stunna
five scrapers deep in traffic fillin' from bumpa to bumpa
you can be like me and let ya hair lock dreds
ya pockets constantly stuffed with green big-faced heads
you can be like me and wanna change ya life
no more grindin' an' bustin' slugs
just keepin' bopnuts day and night
you can be like me or you can be like mike
he only on one on the court but i'm always on a hype
you can be like me and wear nothin' but airs
never messin' with busters but some real players
you can be like me and keep ya head in some books
don't be an illiterate criminal at least be a smart crook
you can be like me and stay solid day in an' day out
in here or wherever you-know-what-i'm-talkin'-'bout
it's nothin' you can be like me
i does this

-Emmy-boe, 150 Crew

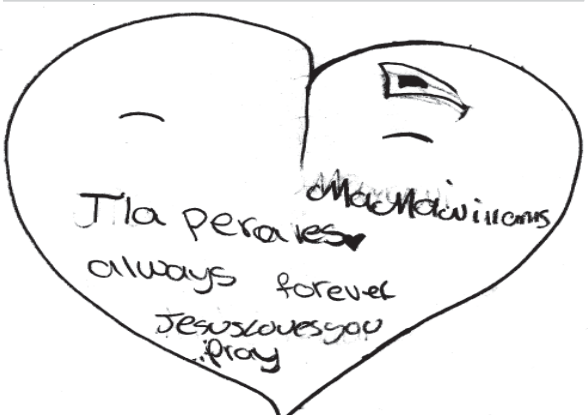
From The Beat: You didn't say, 'cause it's self-evident, that you can write rhymes hard as cement or ornamental as a palatial residence. But if you really mean you'll quit grinding and busting slugs, why still claim to be a smart crook to all these thugs? Why not leave the crookedness behind, 'cause we know you've got the capability of a first-rate mind; and you're adding a new dimension of the educated kind, book smart to set apart your ambitions from the dead-end revisions of the street-smart renditions. Too many high rollers in the Pen', for you to let yourself be just one of them. Raise your eyes to a higher prize!

Cold Mountain

Engineerin' in the best hi-tech fashion
Qualities of a made man keeps his distance
From any Cold Mountain
Not shiverin' and shakin'
But dramatically challenged
Traumatized
By when his little sister was dyin'
Life known to such grief,
Patience won't last in me
It won't live in me
I won't let it
Stuck in a shell with patience
Writin' with Louis Armstrong
Writin' a blemish
Cry baby or bitch!
Still tellin' stories
To meet women,
To be continued . . .

-Lee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lee, what a piece! What is it that the 'Cold Mountain' symbolizes? What is it that you need to keep your distance from? You took us on a ride, not crystal clear, but we follow. Where else can we go? Take us. We look forward to your next piece.



I Wish I Never Saw...

I wish I never saw
A girl who has been abandoned all her life
I wish I never saw
My momma using a crack pipe
I wish I never heard
The demon inside of me
That told me to do my criminal act
And now, look at me
I wish
I should
Coulda listened to every adult in my life
Now I'm wishing
I never had to see these
Four white walls.

-Meka, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Meka, okay, so, now that you've thought about what wish you've you never saw, in the past. Now, we want to know, what do you want to see in the future. Write about that in your next piece. We realize that there are life experiences that nobody should have to go through. BUT we also believe that all things happen for a reason. So – what is the reason that you've experienced these hurtful things in your life? To bring you down? – Or to make you stronger? You have the power to decide where your future will go. What should you do – what can you do. You tell us.

That Person

I would talk to my dad and ask him why he left us, my lil' sis and me. Damn, we needed him.

Maybe I wouldn't be locked-up at this point looking at my four walls. Maybe I wouldn't have to grind to get the things that I want 'cause it's hard on my mom.

Damn, she got four other kids besides me and they need her just like me. I never had any real man in my life to sit down and tell me the differences between a real young man, and what to say when they are rushing you into having sex with them.

My mom played the roll of a mom and dad. I mean, I had a step-dad that tried to tell me things, but it doesn't feel right because that's not my dad. He should not have to be that person to tell me that.

Maybe if I had my dad in my life, things would be a lil' better.

-Yana-Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yana-Bo, unfortunately, some of us grow up without fathers. It makes life so much rougher. Things probably would be better, if you had your dad in your life. Things would be better if you were rich. Right? We can probably make a list of things that would make life easier, but – we discover ourselves, who we are, by how we deal with what life dishes out to us. We know that it is rough. Don't let this bring you down. You have so much potential, live a great life.

Downhill

At first
Everything was good
We had a big house
Two cars
And we were outta the hood
Seems like every time
She took a hit
My world was torn apart
A lil' bit
When we lost our house
I knew it was over
I was left out on my own
Without her
I found out today
That she was in jail
Yet again I'm going through hell
If only she could've held me
And told me that she loved me
I wouldn't have to find refuge
In drugs and older men
See, I'm at the bottom of the hill now
Tryin' to get up
I pray my mommy will see her faults
And will no longer be stuck.

-Miniona, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Miniona, unfortunately you are in a horrible situation. BUT you know about your mom's drug problem – how can you turn to drugs as a refuge? There is nothing protective about drugs. You should know that more than anybody. Now it's your turn to beg yourself to stop. We beg you. This is your first time in the Hall – don't come back! Find refuge in education, in a hobby, in writing. You are a talented writer. Stick with it. Get all of your dreams, your fears, your experiences, and your feelings down on paper. Get it out of your system. Let your imagination take you away. Find refuge in something that will take you in another direction, other than downward.

I Wish I Never Heard of Juvenile Hall

I wish I never heard of Juvenile Hall, because of the simple fact that I do not want to be here. Some people put themselves in here, and I do not want to be in here again.

This is a bad place. This is not a place for me, because I have a son to take care of. And when I get out, I am going to be the best dad I can be. And if I was a man to go in, then I am go' be a man to take care of what came out — because I need to be a man and take care of my stuff and try to be a good person.

And I wish I never heard of CYA, because I do not want to go there. I heard some bad stuff about CYA, and if I go there I do not know what is going to happen! And I need to stay out of here — and if I can't do what I want to do, then how am I going to be a good father?

And when I get out, I want to do right and get back into school and get a job and try to go somewhere in life, because I want to be somebody when I get out.

I want to do a lot with my little boy, and if I get the chance — to do something with his life! And I do not want him to be like his father, because if he' like me, then I do not know what I would do. If I seen my son in Juvenile Hall, I would go crazy!

-Maximum Security, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're right that your son needs a dependable and trustworthy father, a father living free and responsibly. And when you get your release, going back to school and getting a job, is a good start. But what you choose not to do means a lot, too — 'cause we've seen too many square/thugs serving time for a part-time grind. If you go to the Y, get your GED and high school degree while you're there; and take whatever job-training classes they make available. Wherever you go, work to be that man your son deserves to call his father.

Maybe if I had my dad in my life, things would be a lil' better.

Where I've Been / Where I'm Going

I was born on the ninth of December, 1986, in Oakland to a lady by the name of Tanya. During the time of my life, I have seen everything.

I have seen my mom use drugs. I have seen people die, and I have also seen my life change towards the wrong direction. Ever since I was twelve years old, I've been in and out of Juvenile Hall. I been to group homes; I been to Camp; but now I'm going to the ultimate place: California Youth Authority.

I feel that if I'm given another chance, that I can change my life for the better. I can take care of my family, look out for my baby brother, stay off street corners, get a job, and strive for my high school diploma! Thank you for listening to me. Sincerely,

-Carleton, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is great to have you writing words about yourself for our readers. Sadly, you are a veteran of doing time in the Hall; and now you're moving on to CYA. In another way though, that means you have a lot to teach our special readership, which is made up of young people in juvenile halls — who maybe started out like you but don't want to end up like you. Most of them will have that one more chance to change you wish for — but then, you'll get your chance, guaranteed, when you're released from the Y. So use your time there to prepare yourself.

I have seen my mom use drugs. I have seen people die, and I have also seen my life change towards the wrong direction

Do Something With Your Life; I Am!

What's up? I am Johnathan, but everybody knows me better by my last name. I am from West Oakland, but I want to let all y'all lil' kids know that you people can do something with your life or do some basketball or football because that's the best thing going right now!

But that's how life goes in the 'hood, but everybody knows me where I'm from because everybody knows how I get down. So check this out youngsta. If you know me, you know I have a son on the way, and I have to stay on my feet and get in my car. But I love my lil' one God sent me like an angel from above.

But you all know when I get out, I will do something positive for myself, you know. But I hope the judge has some faith in me. But everybody knows that the judge is not going to let me out. But I tell you what, I'm going to be on one for myself — but I need to do something positive, you know!

But y'all got to be cool out here in Oakland. It ain't the same! But man, I have to be on one at all times, you know. But keep it real, do right and do your stuff, you know. But I'm not going to be here no more, because I am a man now. But you can't believe I'm still alive, you know! But I am going to be out.

-Johnathan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Since we're a newspaper read by the public, we can't by law print the first and last name of a juvenile detainee. So, we just put Johnathan as we have in the past. We're sorry because we know you were using your last name because you know that more youngsters from your part of town will know you by your last name — and you want them to know who it is giving them a personal message about doing right and doing something positive with in life. Still, we feel it's all there in your words to be read. So, thanks for what you said!

What You Don't Know, Can't Hurt You

I talk to ghosts inside
My head
Who hurts really bad
And would rather be dead
It cries inside, and sometimes
It comes out
And when it gets mad,
It slowly begins to shout

Only I can hear
'Cause, of course
It's a ghost
But I'm the one that killed it
And everyday it's hard work

It asks to be alive
But it only knows wrong
And I've been doing good
So I tell him
To leave me alone

It tells me all the bad things
And makes me mad
But I think of all the blessings
That I'll get, have, and had

I tell the little ghost that
I can no longer do wrong
But the ghost always finds a way
To break me down.

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When the ghost in your head hurts really bad, do you comfort the ghost? What do you say? When the ghost gets mad – What do you say? Who has more control? Don't let this ghost break you down. You CAN be in control. You can make the right decisions. Imay, we've seen you struggle back and forth with this. Don't be afraid of this ghost. You can beat this ghost – don't be afraid to ask for help.

I Wish the Judge Didn't Say No to Camp

I wish I never heard the judge say I couldn't go to Camp because he thinks I'll run! He doesn't even know me, so I don't see how he can say that I'm not fit for Camp.

It's not like I've been to a group home or to Camp before. So I don't see why he can't give me a chance to prove to him and to everyone else that I'm not a bad person — and that I wouldn't run! I would do my program and get my GED and get out and take care of my family and stay out of the system for good.

They would never see or hear from me again, and that's a promise — because I would move somewhere that would allow me and my family to live a peaceful life. But they don't want to give me that chance! So I'm just going to have to do whatever time that the judge gives me, and then I'm going to get out and just do the right thing.

At least I know I don't have to go to CYA. That's the good thing! So now I just hope I can stay here until I turn eighteen — and then go home. ... Well, it's about that time. I love you Gabriella and Maressa. Bye.

-Matt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We think you could have made it at Camp, but we're happy for you that you didn't have to go to CYA. Though the truth is, that wherever you go or don't go, and however easy or difficult it may be — the real test is when you're on the outs with that chance to live a peaceful and productive life. You say you plan on your family moving to another place. What if they don't? It's still on you to maintain peace within yourself; even in a war zone. Camp would test you every weekend; and all the funk campers get away with on weekends would tempt you to fall back on an "if I don't get caught" attitude that would do you in the end. But if you "just do the right thing" — it's all good!

Deaths

Something that I wish I never saw was when I was seven, my friend Miguel in a casket. The affect it had on me was depressing. Things that I would do when he was alive, I wouldn't do.

A couple of years before that, I heard that my grandfather in South Carolina passed away, and just a few months ago, my friend Christian died because somebody beat him up and through him in the river, and he couldn't swim. Sometime ago, in the '90's, my man's best friend died from head trauma. Everybody called her sister, "Charlie." Sometime in 2003, her nephew Thomas and my friend died.

-Arsenio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That is a lot of deaths to digest in such a short period of time. Do you value your life more now? How do you treat your life differently these days? Are you thinking differently?

he thinks I'll run! He doesn't even know me

The Good Days

I never forget my good days. A good day to me, is when me an' my ninjas from the turf go an' dress up, find a nice place to scrape out to meet new females an' just go dumb all day long wit' the females, our turf tee shirts on an' be like — are all y'all from the same spot?

An' we tell them yeah an' ask them where they from an' just chill, get the number, scrape out, go eat, meet some mo' females, get they number; you know us, real East Oakland stunna boys keep it lit! Then we come back to the town, paint it a few times, go dumb, then slide by the turf, chill for a few, then scrape out wherever the party at, get there, no problems, holla at more boppers!

Then after all that, next day , get to the turf, business time, get money, get money an' get money, fo' the next five days, then the week ended. It go down, everybody meet up get in the scraper, go dumb off some purple candy wit' some of that boost drink that's better than Red Bull, ya know; it's some of that good Incredible Hulk — then stunt to like three in the morning!

Then the next day spend some time wit' the females you met outta the town, kick it, go to the house an' just do what we all do, watch movies an' all the good stuff, then come home an' call them boppers from the party an' see how they doing an' what they talkin' about an' what's going down at her house. Then you just talk; then you get tired an- tell her you'll call her back — an' don't.

Then look at the news: nobody got killed – that mean a good week just passed; no police; nobody' family crying. An' to top it off, play some Playstation wit' the lil' bra, eat a home meal, an den it's a wrap for them two weeks. Next week is next week.

-Bandits, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And here's a taste of Earl aka Bandits, story teller par excellence; serving some of the flavors that a young thug develops a taste for on a weekly basis. And it's filled with nostalgia, 'cause it's a memory of what you call "the good days" — but the good days were a set up. You thought they'd never let up, grinding on the spot when it's hot and when it's not, till that day hit when you get caught again, and again. How many times has it been? From the baby unit, one by one you move on, till you hit max! Your version is a beautiful little story, with a fairy-tale ending that evades this fact: that life style will keep you coming back! You need to change your grind, make up your mind once and for all, that slanging dope on the spot is a set up to fall. Get your education and a straight job, square up on weekdays and on weekends mob. But thanks for the description of the weekend life of a thug on a mission to enjoyment ! Now just change your mode of employment , brake on the drugging and mean mugging — maybe you'll make us believers in successful square thugging.

I Love You, Help Me

i love you so bye bye please please pray for me
anyways i'm goin' to c-y-a for many days
my name is danny boy bye bye bye bye bye
bye bye here i come c-y-a so bye bye bye
please please i don't know no more
what to do wit' myself because
i need someone to help me wit' myself
please please i don't know
i'm goin' to c y a for eight to twelve months
please pray for me can you help me please
i've done a lot of bad things in my time
i am sixteen years old i love you all
so i am going to keep my head up i love you all
the staff some are good too us
like they are right with us — mister rich
he is good people he helps us to get by
because some of us is goin' to the c-y-a like me
please i got c-y-a please pray for me
please god be with me and help me please
i love you all god please hear me
i want to be free god i'm locked up
and it is bad for me this place is bad
it is hurting people i love you all
can you help me please my name is danny
my mom dolly my sis' brandy my sis' roxanne
my dad's name is prince so bye bye
know how much i love you
help me please pray for me please

-Danny Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you have us hold the pencil and write, it seems like you try to talk smart, you know, like put something over or make a scandalous joke out of it all. But when you hold the pencil in your own hand and scrawl your words across the page, it feels like it flows straight from the heart. We suspect it's the fast-talking jokester who takes the wheel and drives you straight for trouble. How can you liberate your sincerity to play a more active role in what you do and say? He is God's man.

Group Home

I wish I never heard the PO say that I'm most likely goin' to a Group Home. I was so mad, I wanted to beat the hell out of something.

I tried to tell him that I'd be better off if I stayed at home. I'd be more comfortable and open knowing that I get to see my family at the end of the day, but not now. Now I gotta stay in a place I don't even know, wasting my time, just tryin' to get to the light at the door.

I could be on the outs, getting' an education. That's what it's all about. I shouldn't be complaining. It's my fault that I'm in here for being stupid, not thinkin'. I'm just hopin' all that goes away. I'll forget, everyone will forget. I'm just thinkin' of the good times, better days.

-A-Dude, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There will be better days ahead, but you have to make it happen. Can you make better choices next time? How can you make this time work for you? What can you do to make your future a bright one? What have you learned from this experience?

Grandma

I wish I never saw my grandma in a casket.
Man that day messed me up bad.
Then I kissed her and she was cold.
Man that hurt.

-Monroe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Death hurts. We really experience a loss, especially when it is a loved one. But know that your grandma lived a full life. The coldness that you felt was only her body. It's not her anymore. Know that her soul is in a better place right now. Live your life to make her proud. RIP grandma.

**I'm just hopin' all that goes away.
I'll forget, everyone will forget.**

Eight Years Of My Teenage Life Wasted

I wasted almost eight years of my teenage life, coming in and out of the Halls, placement, foster-care, and the Halls and placements out-of-state. When I got out of my last placement, I saw an old friend of mine. He has been in my life for the past year and he has been a great influence on my life. Although he has his own problems, he has always told me that I need to do the right thing. He encouraged me to go to college and just deal with my probation and get it over with. I did my best, until he moved away.

I couldn't stand the long-distance, and we weren't allowed to see each other, but I messed up and came back, because of our love. This time he is also on probation and I will soon be off, but this will be the last time I end up here for any man.

-Jenny, Marin

From The Beat: Never do anything you don't approve of for any man, especially illegal stuff that will get you busted. Even if he's willing to do illegal stuff and share the profits with you, you're both playing a dead-end game, as you seem to realize. If he's encouraging you to go to college, get a legitimate job, that's great. But you don't need him to tell you what to do —you're very bright and know what you need to do and not do.

I Wish I Never Saw...

I wish I never saw my brother in a casket. That day was the saddest day of my life. I couldn't believe that God had done this to me. I was so mad that I stopped believing in Him and I was talking crap to Him because he took my carnalito.

Then time passed and I had a dream, and the dream was about my carnal. Then he said to me: don't be sad and take care of our mom. I am in a good place. I am close to God. Then he gave me a hug and left.

So now I realize that things happen for a reason. Now I pray to God so He could forgive me for not believing in Him. Now I just want to say something to my brother. I love him and I always have him in my mind. RIP carnal.

-J, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We know you loved your brother a lot. And we know he'd want you to do so well. Follow his advice. He gave you plenty of it. And it was good advice. We know, because you've told us before. Do well.

What Do You Deserve?

I don't deserve anything
My heart yearns to help others
I rather help and make other people feel better
It doesn't matter if I did
I wouldn't do the things I do
I'm nobody
I care too much about my sister and my friends
I'll think about me later
Maybe one day.

-Anonymous, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! You're not nobody. You are a great example of what people should be like. Many people spend their whole life suffering from their own selfishness, never satisfied with what they get. Helping others is the best deed you can do, for others and for yourself. But you know – caring for others also involves caring about yourself. What if something horrible happens to you? Who else would it affect? You deserve a good life, as well as those around you. You and others need to work together to make this possible. Think about others – but make sure you think about yourself as well.

Ain't Feelin' It

I really don't feel anything or anybody right now. It's just too many things going on at one time. So I'm just worried about myself right now. What would be best for me? That's how I'm feeling right now so if it ain't going to help me out in my situation I'm not even gonna think about it.

So if that female want to hear "I love you" so she could stay writing me letters that's what I'm going to say. If my family looking at me, asking me, did I have a hand in my charge, I'm going to say no to keep that support. If it take not to get off on somebody to get what I want up in here on lock down, I ain't goin' do it.

Whatever helps me that's what type of hype I'm on. Whatever's benefiting me I don't even think about. That's how it is. Helping other people don't get you too far in jail. So just do you. Ride it out by yourself because when you come ain't nobody going to be ready to split that time with you.

-Leek B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Even though you ain't feelin' it, you still are as clear minded as anybody out here. It sounds like your handling your business, and that's all that really matters right now. You have plenty of time for girls when you get out, so don't rush it. Get yourself straight before you jump into anything with any girl. Can you feel that?

Although he has his own problems, he has always told me that I need to do the right thing.

I'm nobody
I care too much about my sister and my friends

Death

People can die.
No one is good.
Every day people die.
Heart attacks, gun shootings, gang violence, and so on.
Even though you got a gun, you're still gonna get killed.
No matter how strong you are, you can't fight death.
Death is gonna get you no matter what.
You can't run and hide.
If you travel to the next galaxy or universe, death can still get you.
My point is that you're not God.

-Drone B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hear what you're saying, but you're alive now, so how you live your life until death finds you is what determines if it was worth being here at all. Some people say that focusing on death can help you live a more meaningful life, but it kind of sounds like you're saying that the fact we're all going to die means that life is pointless. Is that what you really think?

Crazy and Young Tezz's Page

Missin' In the Outs

Every day I think about the outs. I think about the things I want to do, and the things I'm going to do. They' hella different!

I think back on chillin' with the homies on the block, drinkin' a forty, and snortin' a line. Man, that shhh was coo' — but the lines got to go! Can't even mess with the bottle till I'm off probation, and even then I might not because it's nothin' but problems for me!

I'm still gonna kick it with the homies though. I miss bein' with the females or bein' with my lady. I miss ridin' around town with my cousin, just cruisin' the streets. I miss going to sleep in a regular bed, or even on the couch.

I miss going to the school after it's out, or during lunch, and kickin' it in front of the school till everybody is gone. I miss funkin' with my rivals. I miss being able to do what I want to do when I want to do it. Most of all, I miss the outs and being free!

-Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Kickin' it with the homies on your day off from whatever job you take when you finish your time at ROP, with one or more job-training certificates of whatever sort in hand; yeah, that will be cool. Now, some will act the fool, waving their ill-gotten gains in your face and telling you that going to a nine-to-five is a waste! When they come back to this place or even more so, an adult jail, they'll remember what wasting time is. Plus, there will be some who see your accomplishment for what it is. Go on teaching by example, and those that can handle the truth will see you as living proof: You can get up off the street and stop acting a foo'.

Much Love

dedicated to the females
don't ever getcha hopes up
love is not luck
sometimes i may suck
but i wish you girls much luck
don't ever do som'in' ya will regret
love is som'in' ya may not get
but i got love fo' ya
when ya give ya body up
ya get called a rip'nut
stop runnin' these streets
an' lettin' us beat
then leave ya in the mist
that's why they call ya rips
that's why nelly call ya tips
so don't get drilled
then ya might get killed
but when ya do that
then y'all got my love back

-Yung Tezz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're so deep in the street mentality, you can't see the reality of the role you play. It's fine to tell others to change their ways, but what are you ready to change? You'd call a young man a player for the same behavior that has you using disrespectful terms for girls; but if you're right that they disrespect themselves, then the same should apply to the fellas. It's one world, so look at yourself, not just at girls.

Time In Here, Not All of It Wasted

All the days in here, have not been wasted time. Most of it, yes — but not all!

I have taken the time to get my credits in school and have become more educated in subjects I was lacking knowledge in. I also passed my high school exit exam. I might not have done all of that if I would have been out.

A lot of time has been wasted though. I have missed holidays and birthdays of my friends and family. But I am trying to put this time to good use while I am here. I figure that's how I should do my time, if I got to do it for my crimes. Stay up!

-Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It has been nothing less than inspiring to witness the process of your taking responsibility for how you use your time. Those who are just passing time, doing as little as possible while waiting for that release; both make their time go even more slowly, and are preparing themselves to go through the same experience in the adult system. No change, no gain — either way there's going to be pain; but no need to put yourself through this all over again! You teach, by decisions you reach.

In Memory of Tim and Oscar, RIP

Man, my cousin, Tim, from Oakland, died. Or should I say, he was murdered — by some ninja that suppose' to be family!

But when I was in St. Louis, Missouri, chillin', smokin', drinkin', feel me; an' thinkin' it's coo' — one day in 2001, I get a call from a family member, sayin' that Tim died! My heart dropped! Then they told me he was murdered by a close homie!

Well, my cousin was at a family get-together. Now, ever since I've known my cousin, he doesn't and can't swim, and that ninja would fire on ya if you try to push or play with him when it comes to water. So can someone tell me why he would jump in a river? I don't understand; but the person who did it, needs to understand that what goes 'round, comes 'round.

My ninja Oscar, we was on the block gettin' off some rocks; and next thing ya know, we see a black 'Stang pullin' up. Feel me, we ain't funkin' wit' nobody, so we ain't trippin'; but I stay wit' my buddy, on the hip. Then I see a chrome forty-five come out the window and start bustin'!

I cut around the house. I heard my ninja say, "Shhh!" Then I heard a thump! It's a miracle, 'cause he lived. But where he got shot, it had all the ninjas spooked — it was two centimeters away!

But I got love for all y'all! Fo' y'all that's readin' this, this ain't the place to be! When you get out, stay out. The game ain't no game, this' life! So make som'in' of it. Stay up. RIP Tim and Oscar.

-Yung Tezz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You don't tell us how Oscar did die. He survived that shooting, so what took him out. Still, your two stories illustrate powerfully : "The game ain't no game" and it's nothing to play with. Maybe you got into it, to put food on the table — but you're getting old enough now to find another way to make your pay. Get out while you're still living, 'cause pain and death, is all the game ends up giving!

I miss going to sleep in a regular bed, or even on the couch.

Cory and Abbas' Page

Wish I Never Saw That Group of Kids

When I was in seventh grade, I was an all-star athlete. I always participated in every sport and was better than average.

During my junior high school years, I saw a group of kids always getting high and cutting class. I'm strong but the urge of wanting to find out what all the commotion was about, proved too much for me.

I fell into a trap and started kicking it — smoking weed, cutting class, and, most of all, disrespecting my parents. I wish I never saw that group of kids! But most of all, I wish I would have listened to my parents!

-Cory, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's not too late to start showing your parents the respect they deserved all along. And while you can't change the past, you can change the meaning of the past by learning a lesson from your mistake. You can even change the meaning of this incarceration if you can use the time to educate, mature and strengthen your mind.

In and Out of the Hall

I have been in and out of Juvenile Hall since the age of fifteen. Being displeased with my past, I have plans for a brighter future.

I'm an all-star baseball player, but because of my actions — I cannot play anymore. I have wasted my time and my parents' money; but first and foremost, I have wasted my own education.

I am most likely to go to ROP (Rites of Passage), and I plan there to pick up from where I left off — not wasting any more time while I am here on this earth breathing!

-Cory, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are without a doubt, making the best of a bad situation. It's true that you've wasted enough time, so your resolve to use your time at ROP to pick up what you gave up when you were free, deserves both respect and

I'm strong but the urge of wanting to find out what all the commotion was about, proved too much for me.

I'd Talk to My Brother In Folsom

If given the chance, I would like to talk to my brother. He has been incarcerated for the last eight years of his life — having had no contact with me or my family.

We heard that he is in Folsom. So, rather than my family merely wishing for a chance to talk to my brother — we are blessed to have an opportunity in the real world.

I would like to ask him, "Why?" And besides that, I would like to help him come up with a successful plan of action for when he gets out.

-Cory, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You want to ask him why — why has he refused to contact his family? Or, why is he incarcerated? Why what? But we feel your love for your brother, especially in you desire to help him figure out how to stay free when he goes free. That's the way to show love!

I Wish I Never ...

i wish i never saw my cousin and
grandmother
in their caskets
i loved them both dearly
and when they left my life
they took a piece of me with them
i wish i never saw weed
or ever used it
it totally messed up my life
it caused me to be
in the situation i'm in right now
i wish i never saw juvenile hall
or how the system treats us
like we're animals
i wish i never heard of cutting school
because i could've got a better education
instead of running around
and getting in trouble

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Though your heart, mind and soul, have suffered by things you've seen and done; you have become a wiser and more compassionate human being. Though you cannot change the past, you've succeeded in changing yourself — and that is a great victory, the fruits of which are yet to be harvested.

I Love You Dad, RIP

One person I would love to sit down and talk to, would be my dad. Since he passed away when I was only one, I really don't know that much about him. I would ask him about his youth and our family history. I love you, Dad — rest in peace!

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Without a father there to guide you, learning to be a man can be a hazardous course. You did it the hard way, but we think your father would be proud of the man you are today; regardless of where you are at this moment.

he (dad) passed away when I was only one

I've Used This Time Productively

I have been incarcerated in Juvenile Hall for about nine months. If I was on the outs, I would probably be doing the same old thing — smoking, drinking, and partying. I really don't view being incarcerated as wasted time!

I feel that I'm ready to be free again and make the right decisions this time. While I'm in here, I keep busy and study; so when I get out, I'll be ready for the outside world.

My incarceration has prepared me for the real world, how to be a man in it, so that's why I don't consider it to be wasted time. I feel whenever I get out, I will be doing things that are productive instead of going back to my old ways.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're not one of those who has been shuffling in and out of the Hall, and we're willing to bet you won't be back. That's assuming you don't go back to smoking marijuana and cutting school. Remember when it comes to either: One is too many and a thousand never enough. Don't let it get started.

Ariyca' Page

A Sold Dream

I wish my boyfriend wouldn't sell me dreams. Everything he says to me sounds all good. I tell myself, "Re-re, don't butter his crap," but really, I do.

He tells me, "Sexy, you gon' have my baby and you're gone be my wifey. We're just going through this for now until we get everything good."

I tell myself, "You're just doing this for now, so don't even trip. You'll be another example for other people who don't do this crap." I love the heck out of my baby, but I know that selling my body is not worth it. My stuff might still be tight, but it won't after a while. "The ninjas I do it with say I'm too cute for this, and I still got it." is what I tell myself. "So why should I worry about what anybody else says since I got it?".

My boyfriend says, "You don't have to go out there if you don't want to, I'm not making you." He doesn't even tell me to go out there. I go on my own. I don't even give him my money. Some people tell me, "Oh, he's your pimp.", but I could have sworn that a pimp was a man that gets paid. I don't be paying nobody.

Well my man has a daughter. Her mom isn't there, she stays with his cousin. Supposedly, she's my daughter, but that's not what I want. I want me and him to be together, without him selling weed and me selling my ass. Him fighting ninjas every other day because he's on top of the game and they're not; me, felling like a rubber-band and getting stretched out. I think I'm really the one selling a dream, because I take it to heart, even if I don't show it.

Me and my man got our own house, but we always stay at a motel. I don't know why. "Is he cheating? Selling weed? Or going out to kick it?", is what I ask myself.

He tells me " I can be with whoever I want, because I'm young and I need to learn.". I love him and he tells me the same. I show him and I show him the same. Being locked up makes you think a lot. Especially, about those late nights when you come in the house, take your clothes off, hop in the shower, get out with a towel, sit on his lap, drink my Alize, he drinks his Belvedere. And I push him on the bed, a passionate night of love – Oh my God, just thinking about it.

The whole point is, I love to dream, who doesn't? But I can't stand to have to "buy a dream." Otherwise, be "sold a dream."

-Ariyca, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ariyca, you are too good to be selling your body, nobody should have to go through that. We aren't too sure that your boyfriend is the one for you. He may not tell you not to go out there, hoein', but when it comes down to it, will he really be there for you? To support you and your decisions? What are the qualities that you look for in a boyfriend? Does he have them? It feels good to have someone love you, but the point is to pick someone special. Someone that you can trust. Someone that wants the same things you want, to share a future with. Otherwise, what's the point? You are just selling yourself short. You are choosing someone else's future, not yours. You're right we all love to dream – why? To create a world that we find new exciting, safe, productive, inspiring. You have the potential to transform your reality into all these things. BUT – don't make the mistake of being just an 'extra' in someone else's dream. Don't buy his, create your own.

Men Ain't Nothing

Me, doing this crap is getting old
People tell me stuff
That I've already been told
I love him so much,
But this crap is getting tough
The life I lead
I know it's rough
I want a baby
Am I ready?
Hell no!!
I finally understand
Life ain't nothing
Even with a man.

-Ariyca, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Life ain't nothing? What do you like about life? Don't think 'nothing'. You know, just as much as we do, that life has ups and downs. So, what do you like about life? Memories? Do you remember laughing so hard that your stomach hurt? Do you remember what your favorite food tastes like? Do you remember how it feels when someone says "I love you"? These are all the things that make life 'something' – right? It's the bad times that make us really appreciate the good times. Understand that.

The whole point is, I love to dream, who doesn't? But I can't stand to have to "buy a dream." Otherwise, be "sold a dream."

Black Majik's Page

Victimized Criminal

I was born a lost child
Mind versatile
God's prodigy
But turned vile
Surrounded by cynical smiles
Eyes and mind evaded the bible
Born in the 'hood where I created indignant rivals
My style
Was one people wanted
Like Suge Knight wanted Pac
That boy was on it
Haunted
By vision of demons
Scheming
Insidiously bringin'
Me to the devil, emancipatin' my already jailed freedom
Only seein'
What the system got me breathin'
Thug life in it's most natural form
Institutionalized when I was reborn
Torn
From my natural roots
Of course I'm gonna be not used to the community when turned loose,
I'm a threat like brown and blacks in suits,
Rappers in cash paid coupes,
Whites in all black trench coats and black boots,
Terrorist makin' the president's soup.
Can you relate to me?
I'm just a victimized criminal, only failures people see
Lost in the misery of the streets
I ask my victims to help me
I said can you relate to me?
I'm just a victimized criminal
Lost, feelin' pitiful
Can't rise
Held down from people being over critical
Can you relate to me?
I'm just a victimized criminal, only failures people see
Lost in the misery of the streets
I ask my victims to help me
I said can you relate to me?
I'm just a victimized criminal
Lost, feelin' pitiful
Can't rise
Held down from people being over critical
Popped shots
Lost like minds of crack rocks
I'm worn out in life like county socks
How can I stop?
Life just a flurry illusion
Of drug distribution
Like duckin' from unseen bullets causin' confusion
My thug life inducing
Symptoms like a cold causing yo' nose to start oozing
Producin'
Another killa in the streets cruisin'
Illiterate
Even though I don't seem like it
How can I live in a sucka society when I'm a soldja born militant
Confused when they say God love me
Don't feel him in otha ninjas they scared to hug me
Scared of my temper, don't touch me!
People supposedly see my potential
But when I vouch for myself they ask for credentials
Suicide my closest friend 'cause I'm goin' mental
What else can I say, I'm a victimized criminal.

-Black Majik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are not a victim; you are a survivor. If you keep thinking of yourself as a victim, then you will never get far in life. You have to be strong and man up to your actions. Tell yourself, "I've been dealt a bad hand, but I will survive." Ya dig folks? You are smart and a hella cool person; if you use your smarts and ability — you will make it.

I have insecurities thay eat me alive

One Love

All I need is one love
One mouth to tell her that I love her
That I respect her to be my baby's motha
How I feel queasy when she hugs me
How we fit perfect as a couple when she loves me
What would I be without her presence?
I'd feel like a peasant
Not worth God's hours, minutes, or seconds
The courage to display who I truly am
As a teenager growing to a man
And how I take shhh when shhh hits the fan
That I have insecurities thay eat me alive
How I try and hide
From life
'Cause I still wanna be five
That I fear God
And fear death
That I have trouble handling stress
And don't wanna wake to tomorrow's breaths
Tell her she's all I got
Even though hella chicks want me
But I want her
I got one love and that's her
My baby mother.

-Black Majik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You portray yourself like a good man; your lady is lucky too. How do you make her feel like a queen? How does she make you feel like a king? How can the two of you make up for lost time when you get out? How can you make it so that the three of you are never apart again? Tell us about your baby.

Black Majik And Green Eyes' Page

Life's Product

I used to be a yard rusha
Bone crusha
Turned hustler
Lungs is bud suckas
I'm the epitome of sinistry
If I was Harry Potter I'd be locked up 'cause the ministry
If he or she could be
I could be
But I marinated my soul in thug life symbolic to irony
My mind good
Heart took a complex path
Like college-level math
Taught by yo' self wit' no staff
If I was glass
You wouldn't see through it
It be black like tarred lungs, you would be left clueless
Heart guarded
Neva left open
Heart hardened
Leaving my body and soul frozen
How it started
Problems what else
Life like amphetamines, bad for my health
I'm life's product
Wearin' county clothes, not Gucci and Prada
I'm a California citizen about to get shipped off to Nevada.

-Black Majik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice use of rhyme; you've got a wonderful mind. If you study and wisely use your time; you will move up to your prime. You are very smart and on top of that you have a good heart so go ahead and start a new life for yourself. Stop doing things that's bad for your health. Treat yourself with majesty and wealth. Keep The Beat posted when you are in Nevada! We're listening.

Freestyle Tuesday

Rhymes cold like ice cones
I could freeze a cyclone
Shoot the breeze 'cause I'll cut quick like civics wit' nitro
My life like dice: high, low
I'll neva change my skin color like Michael Jackson
Please fasten yo' seatbelts
'Cause I'm still spinnin' so long the rims melt
If he felt
The heat
Jump out yo' seat
And melody wit' the beat
Go big in one week
Like reek the sneak
Listen to my CD you won't get no sleep
It'll slap you around till you can't ya cheeks
I done paid the cost to be the boss
Now I'm tryin' to grow my hair long like Diana Ross
Don't play games like Lara Croft
If you feed me bullets you could call me a sawed off
A raw dawg with talent
I'm retro like Jordan and cool like New Balance
You don't want it
You can't grab it
Remember the name Black Majik

-Black Majik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your confidence is seeping through the pages, you are a young poet to reckon with, to listen to in The Beat pages. Keep the knowledge coming our way. If you use your rhyming skills you will be making more than what minimum wage is. How can you take yourself to the top? Good luck with all that you do.

The Homie

What's up? This is Green Eyes, and I want to dedicate these poems to the homie, Berto, who is in the "Pen".

seventeen years in the pen
he knows his way around the place
bulletproof eyes
body tough as metal
a neatly folded handkerchief
hangin' out of his pocket
like a presidential car
he walks slowly across the compound
noddin' at cons standin'
on cellblock landings
with a smile
that is just part of the rules

-Green Eyes, 150 Crew

From The Beat: These poems, largely through their closely observed details, are infused with the feeling of life in the pen'. Of course you're fascinated! It's where your father lives. But don't let your fascination take you there, too. It's not all as cool as a slow stroll across the yard, giving and getting respect.

They Say

What's up! This Green Eyes, and I am writing a little somethin'. People say it will happen to me if I hit the "Pen" — so check out my lil' poem.

behind the smooth texture of my eyes
way inside me
a part of me has died
i move my bloody fingernails across it
hard as a blackboard
run my fingers along it
the chalk-white scars
that say i am scared
scared of what will become of me
the real me
if i hide behind them prison walls
stickin' foo's
gettin' time
dedicated to all facing time

-Green Eyes, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wherever you're getting these poems, they are powerful and well worth reading. But why not give us the author's name so we can offer props? At the center of this poem is the fear that the poet is losing himself to the gangster mask he wears — that it will seal his fate and steal his life!

**say i am scared
scared of what will
become of me
the real me**

RIP OG Flip

What's up! This the homie, Green Eyes, 'bout to write on the topic, "I Wish I Never Heard" — so check it out!

It was a coo' day when I was postin' on the other side, and a homie was like, "Someone got smoke' on the spot!" So me and the homies cut to our spot, and I was like, "Damn!" — when I heard the name of the homie, Flip!

I was like, "Damn! (RIP OG Flip —) Not the homie!" I was tryin' to find out who did it. You'll never be forgotten, homes! Much love and respect, your young homie, Green Eyes. RIP Flip.

-Green Eyes, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You won't want to hear this, and it hurts to say it, too; but it's the truth — you and all your homies who perpetuate this seemingly endless drug war of brown on brown, are the ones who shot your homie down. RIP Flip.

Green Eyes' Page

I've Been Havin' Dreams

What's up? This Green Eyes, and I'm'a write some of what I've been seein' in my dreams from what I've been soakin' up from my pops and from other OG's. So check it out!

we came here to get away from false promises
from dictators in our neighborhoods
who wore blue suits and broke our doors down when they wanted
arrested us when they pleased
they are h p d and gang task
but it's no different in the pen
(from what i hear from my pops and from oh gees)
it's all concentrated
the doctors don't care
bodies decay minds deteriorate
learn nothing of value
homies lives don't get better
people go down quick when they get hit with that shank stick
(goin' into my dream i had)
they say i am soon seein' a cell with criss-crossed laundry lines
my tee-shirts boxer-shorts pants and socks dryin'
just like it used to be in my neighborhood as i was growin' up
from all the laundry hung window to window
across the way goo goo is stickin' his hands through the bars
to hand lil' joe a cigarette while lil' rickey lil' leo and green eyes
hollerin' back and forth across from cell to cell to cell
talkin' 'bout their females and the good old days
lazy and payaso downstairs hollerin' angrily
that their toilets overflowin'
giggles sayin' that his heater don't work
i ask speedy next door to shoot me a little soap to finish my laundry
i look down and see new prisoners comin' in
mattresses rolled up and on their shoulders
new haircuts and boots
lookin' around each with a dream in their heart
thinkin' they'll get a chance to change their lives
but in the end some will just sit around talkin' about
how good the old days was
some of the younger ones will become gangsters
some will die and others will go on livin' without a soul
without a future or a reason to live
some will make it out of here with hate in their eyes
but so very few make it out as human as they came in
they leave wonderin' what good they are now
as they look at their hands so long away from their tools
as they look at themselves so long gone from their families
no one can possibly understand
except the ones that been through what they been through
so long gone from life itself
a lot of things have changed

Well, this is a little somethin' that I put together for the readers of The Beat Within. And you know it's somethin' real, but it's somethin' that I hope not to see except in my dreams. So I'm'a strive for the better, for me and my homies to stay free. But if we see this day, all we can do is ride it out. Feel me! This poem is dedicated to everyone facing time, but especially to the homies whose names appear in it. One love.

-Green Eyes, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We appreciate your putting together this poem, from whatever source of writing, and it is interesting to see you insert the names of long-time Beat writers; all of whom are currently 150 Crew detainees except Speedy, right? We hope it isn't a prophecy of what's to come; bu then, you wouldn't all be lucky enough to be so near each other in penitentiaries as large as small cities. On the real, what does "strive for the better" mean? 'Cause from what we hear you say, this is, sad to say, exactly where you will end up one day. And it doesn't have to be that way! Stop blaming rivals, police and the system — 'cause the only one who can save you from this, is the one who refuses to listen: you! But you'll just say we don't understand. But we fear that we do. This much is for sure true — it's all up to you, what you think and what you (choose) to do.

Who Understands But My Bro's and Homies

This is a little somethin' I've been seein' them tryin' to do to me. They tryin' to play a homie. I am already separated from my pops and my bro. Pops in the "Pen" and my bro's in the "Y". Shhh, what's next? That's why I say forget the five-oh and the system and my rivals. They playin' homies —

they say i'll be on my way
to a place where they turn off the water
so i'll live with no water
they'll build higher walls
so i'll live without the outside world
they'll paint the windows
so i'll live without sun
they'll lock my cage
so i'll live without goin' anywhere
they take each last tear i have
so this gangster lives without tears
they take my life and crush it
so i live without a future
they give me pain
so i live with pain
they give me hate
so i live with hate
they separate me from my brothers
so i live without brothers

-Green Eyes, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This sounds like it could have been written by your pops. And it is tragic that anyone's life must come to this. You say that they're trying to do it to you. If by that you mean, this is what lies in store for you if you live the life of an armed gangster caught up in a bloody drug war with rivals and police, then you're probably right. Following in your pop's and brother's footsteps, just might take you to the bleak reality you depict.

they give me pain
so i live with pain
they give me hate
so i live with hate

Young Smokey's Page

Facts

I live in the Bay Area, but I'm from the Peninsula,
Disrespect out there family gonna be missin' ya
'Cause ninjas really don't like to talk
Rather show ya, have ya body outlined in chalk
We was raised on military tactics
Our anger hits like flames to matches,
Sparks quick and does hella damage.
We so lost by our parents, we can't be managed,
In hella ways 'cause our way of thinkin' is savage.
Not in a gangsta way
I mean in cannibal type way
We devour our own kind by sellin' them hop an' cane
Wit' money we buy gold ones an' platinum chains.
On a mission for 2Pac's street fame
Instead of payin' Pacific Gas & Electricity.
Moms duce at home, livin' in misery,
Ain't tryin' to help her, but when I was a baby she took care of me.
Tellin' ya homes, it's our way of thinkin',
She work a 9 to 5 just to barely pay some bill,
Our 9 to 5 is sellin' dope and poppin' pills,
An' duckin' bullets, hopin' we don't get drilled
Wit' them hollows ain't tryin' to be filled
But we out there anyway, like we finsta make a mill.
Thinkin' we big when we get diamonds in the grill,
Don't be mad, I'm just keepin' it real.
Don't get Smokes twisted, I be out there too,
I just see my faults and the wrongs I do.
I gangbang, guess it's either red or blue,
But to me folks, one them colors ain't coo'.
In a lot of ways I'm just like you,
I hit some sales, always dope or crystal,
Been in funk, can't leave house wit' out a knife or pistol.
In summer, funk get hot in the city of South San Francisco,
So homeboy I been there, done that,
If I had the hands of time, I'd turn them back,
'Cause now I'm in a cell realizin' the knowledge I lacked.
If today they get me out, I do the same thing, that a fact,
Don't know why, but I will still live my life fast.
Regardless of the controversy
In a way I'm thirsty, unlike spite I use the streets for it to convince
Notice I ain't said shhh in past tense,
Hopefully the Lord will have mercy the day I'm in his presence.
In a lot of ways I contradict myself,
I want to change but still want to lead this pretend life of wealth,
Trust me I know ya boy need hella help,
I'm lookin' at a few years, plus I 'bout to be eighteen,
Told if I didn't change by now it be cookies for me.
I'm losin' hope, think maybe this my destiny,
Ponderin' maybe this is what Young Smokey bred to be,
A Latino felon if I get slapped wit' this felony,
Never stressed off time like this before,
Don't show it, put on a fake smile when I step out my cell door,
I yell I pimped the system, but feel like a system whore
Where this flow going 'cause I don't know anymore,
Just writin', gettin' things off of my chest,
Runnin' out of paper, so I'm puttin' this to rest.

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that you get your shhh together, 'cause you don't wanna be in the system forever. It doesn't have to be this way all the time. You need to get your stuff together and expand your life and mind. Your destiny is something you can make. Give this dead end life of yours a break.

Way I see it, if ya coo', people finsta listen to ya, 'cause they got respect for ya. Feel me?

Staff

Man I swear the system be tryin' to act super hard like they savage or something! But ya can tell they suckas though. Like not all the staff be messed up but most of them is. Like they come here, act like they got to prove something to somebody, 'cause they try to punk us. But knowin' damn well they hella soft when they leave. Like talkin' 'bout to another he had to ask permission to his wife to go out wit' his potnas! LOL. I be damned if on the outs I ask a female if I could do anything. So ya know the reason he came here actin' hard 'cause at home his wife punk him. Some staff actin' like some girls! Like when they get mad they start to raisin' they voice like females do when they mad. Where I'm from, "men" don't act like all this. Or one day, staff start kickin' on my door to wake me up and I'm already sittin' up awake.

I said to him, "that shhh ain't necessary."

He said, "I'm a grown man, don't tell me what to do youngsta."

I'm like, "OK, ya a grown man, but ya kickin' our door like a five year old. Plus I know some 40 year olds be actin' like they ten, so ya age don't make you a man, it ya state of mind homes!"

He got hella mad and walked away. The only staff that be coo' is the ones that be kickback. They don't let us run a muck, but they also treat us like people! Way I see it, if ya coo', people finsta listen to ya, 'cause they got respect for ya. Feel me? Why make ya job harder by yellin' and shhh. Don't make no damn sense. I'm ghost.

Note: Hey whoever in Hillcrest up, tell Mr. Lynch his boy Lil' Nick from South City said what up. And see ya soon!

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We agree with you about certain old people act like lil' kids, and it's not your age it's where your mind is at that makes people older or more mature. Don't even trip off of staff, some people like their job and some don't, so that's all it really comes down to. It's usually the coo' staff that like their job, and the grouchy staff that hate their job. Regardless, if you kill them with kindness, things will go smoother for you while you are there.

Shavalier's Page

Fly Gangsta

wearing nothing to impress me
but this fly gangsta lured
this girl into his world
for love saying slick words
and phrases —
the chill or chad boom
ohh ohh —
how you made me love you
why fly gangsta
you fell in love with me
spitting game in one ear
and making love in the other
you persuaded me
to love my fly gangsta
ducking and dodging
in the streets in 'jects
you kept me straight
and safe in your arms
having to watch our backs
day in and day out
from point 'a' to point 'b'
from sunnydale to mission
you made sure
there would be no harm
bein' done unto me
but someone had to spoil
my fantasy world
with my fly gangsta
so god let my fly gangsta
fly away into the deep
and cold ocean to release
his pain and fear
of the mob life
but i will still ask myself
fly gangsta how did
you get so fly —
i will love you always
and forever
r i p adi-trills
antwan
my fly gangsta

-Shavalier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When love is an oasis from hate and fear, it can feel like nothing on earth is so dear. And yet it's tragically clear, one day the bill comes due, and you're all alone with memories of a gangster who once loved you before hate, brought him to his gangster fate. RIP Antwan.

I'm Patiently Waiting

i'm patiently waiting for the day
for us to meet again
because i miss your touch
your laugh and your unconditional
and unforbidden love
i'm patiently waiting for you
to whisper in my ear
and tell me — rise and shine
your nightmares are finally over
because every night i dream
that is playing over and over again
having to cope with your loss
it hurts so much to know
you're gone out of my life
and the world's shoulders
so much to know
you're gone out of my life
and the world's shoulders
so i am going to sit
patiently waiting for my tears
to stop — and hope
i see my true love once again
r i p antwan aka adi-trills

-Shavalier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If lovers cannot meet beyond the grave, then what's a heaven for? But don't just wait for that day in eternity, live your life here on earth well — in his memory, in the name of love.

The Reason Why!

you was in the sheet like
trying to be too street-wise
but you wasn't too wise for the streets
you love the rush of the fast money
people envy the way you hustle
i even envied your hustle
ninjas funking from the same 'jects
that is not even theirs
your falling soldiers
dying one by one
slowly but surely you
are made into a statistic
along with our lost loved ones
from petty gun violence
the reason why i miss you
because you loved me
for who i was and
the reason why i love you
because i miss you
r i p adi-trills

-Shavalier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That life on the street that seems so fast is really nothing but a slow crawl toward death, not a life style at all but a death style before the fall. None of that knowledge can help take away the pain, when someone you love is the next to die in the game. RIP Adi-Trills.

ninjas funking from the same 'jects that is not even theirs

Young Robb and Lil' Dakota's Page

This Is How I Feel

I wish the punk judge
Would get off of my back
I ain't that bad
I think it's my name
Because he knew my dad
They're tryin' to play me
On some ol' other stuff,
But me being the ninja that I am
I still keep it moving
And let the judge know I ain't gonna give up
And when I get out, I want
To sit down and have a talk
With all my lil' brothers
And tell them the get ups
And get downs of being in the streets
Because if I don't, somebody will
And that person may not
Tell them the right things
And how to go about them,
But I'm not gonna let that happen,
And I'm going to school them enough
On stuff so it can prevent them
From ever dealing with
The punk judge.

-Young Robb B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a trip that the judge knows your name because he knew your father. What a cycle, Young Robb. What kind of schooling will you give your little brothers: how to stay in school and help the family and themselves in a legit way, or how to play the streets smarter? If it the latter, we're afraid this judge will be getting to know your younger bro's, too. Please be wise about your life and theirs. Get out of the system by getting out of the game.

The Waste

I wasted time
Doing stupid stuff
On the block
Selling rock to knocks
And keeping a heavy glock
For someone so young
I had stuff on lock
Older people came to me
For they' stuff
And it felt so good
Being the ninja with the stuff,
But now that I think about it
I wish I would have done something different.

-Young Robb B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It does feel good to know you have it going on, especially in the eyes of older folks, but it's important to be real about the lives of the people who are looking up to you. Would you want to live lives like theirs? Are you helping them in positive or negative ways? Are they living free and happy or sad and incarcerated/addicted? You obviously have a good head on your shoulders, so now you need to put it to positive, crime-free use. Do you have any ideas about how you can do this?

Time Is Up

Al first there were two sets of footprints in the sand
then there was one set of footprints in the sand
When time get hard and shhh hit the fan
God don't walk with me, he carrying me man
And right now time can't get no harder
but I feel God have carry me through this 707
and make the days come to an end
I got two more days before this stress
this thinking what's go' happen is up
I just thank God that my time for my 707 is up.

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have come a long way, Dakota. We have watched you mature as the weeks go by. How are you going to deal with the stress that's yet to come, 'cause once the 707 is over, you start all over again in whichever court system, adult or juvenile, the 707 hearing places you in? How do you deal with time when it feels like it can't get any harder?

this game ain't for me
it just can't be
if it was I would been
won a long time ago.

Win

It's like we playing a game we can't win
but still we play because I guess we think we can win
like they say, a hard head make a soft ass
and right now I'm find that out the hard way
because I ain't go' lie, I like bein' in this game
even I know I can't win
I can't stay free
it seems hard to just let the game be
but forget all that
this game ain't for me
it just can't be
if it was I would been won a long time ago.

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Why do you think people do keep playing a game that they can't win? The trick is that Dakota, you did win — by playing the game, you learned a lesson that the game taught, that you have to drop it before it lays you low. You have won within yourself.

Misty, Frank and Rosa's Page

Something To Look Forward To

I look forward to a couple of things. First of all, I look forward to going home on the 22nd. But most of all I look forward to trying my best to stay clean off that crystal. I look forward to trying my best to attend those NA meetings and stay out of this hellhole 'cause I'm so tired of coming back.

This is also my last chance. If I do come back I won't be released back to my mom, I'll be on my way to a group home. I will also try and stay away from some of my homies for a while so I won't mess up and want to get high with them. I also look forward to getting my job and making my money. Those are the most important things I look forward to.

-Misty, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Those are good plans. Have you thought about how you're going to stick to them? For example, your homies are the ones you have history with, you can laugh easily with them. How are you going to stay away from them? Get new friends? Be a loner? Work a lot at your job?

Success To Me . . .

Success to me is getting myself off probation for one. I also believe that success is never getting locked up and finishing school and also starting some kind of career, such as a cosmetologist, radiologist, or nurse. I think I would enjoy all of them. I enjoy doing hair and make-up since I was about six years old, and I became interested in being a radiologist when I broke my leg in summer 2001 and I was interested when they were x-raying my leg.

Success is a goal to me because one of my main goals is to "succeed" in all of my "goals."

-Misty, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: So, how do you decide which career is best for you? Or are you going to pursue all of them? Hey, you could be the radiologist that gives makeovers between X-rays. How are you going to reach these career goals? Find out which schools offer programs? What do you have to do to get into the program and stay in the program?

A Life Without Pain And Suffering

I look forward to a life that does not involve pain and suffering, a simple life. A life that does not involve a locked door, green and tan clothes, and a person with a badge watching every step I take.

I look forward to having my car, and dog, a life that I can make my own decisions, and every time I screw up I don't get locked up for it. To have a steady relationship, and get married one day, and have a life of my own instead of having a PO telling me what to do every minute of my day.

I look forward to getting away from my dad for a long time, so I can grow up the way I want to and be the person I want to be. I look forward to being free once more, and for the rest of my life.

-Frank, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Wow! You know what you want. With all that freedom also comes responsibility, to be a good citizen, boyfriend/husband, dog owner. Are you going to step up and accept that responsibility? Have you ever seen someone try to take freedom's gifts without taking on the responsibility of caring for them?

Looking All My Life

Success is something I have been looking for all of my life. No matter what I have done, it has been so hard for me to succeed in everything that I do. I thought I would succeed in getting off probation in my six-month term but I've been on for over two years. I have been in and out of Juvenile Hall for over three years

There are only two things that I have succeeded in in my life, raising a puppy to full grown dog and designing and building a car from a junkyard. I'm only sixteen, and I do know that I have a lot of years ahead of me to succeed in all of the things I want to do. But I do know one thing, it takes one step at a time to succeed, and I think I need to take the first step.

-Frank, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: What is that first step? Getting out of Juvenile Hall? Off probation? Staying true to yourself and your goals? You've accomplished some big things, raising/caring for another life and creating a machine/piece of art. What do you need to do to keep focused on your goals so you don't get caught up in the things that don't matter?

Getting Closer To My Mom

What I look forward to is getting out of this hellhole! And getting my life together. I'm also looking forward to building a mother-daughter relationship with my mother. I've never had a good relationship with my mother and that's all I've ever wanted, was a mother to be there for me and be a real mother!

My mother-daughter relationship would be my mom to stop living on the streets, to come home and get a real job (not selling drugs!). My mother's never been there for any of her kids, that's all I want is for her to show her love for us and that she really does appreciate us!

-Rosa, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: We sure hope you and your mom will grow closer. Do you think she is ready to put her time and energy into you and your brothers and sisters? If not, what are you going to do? How can you move on in your life? Is there someone else in your life that you feel you can turn to, like a mother, and say what's on your mind, maybe get advice, and support? Can you try to find someone like that — a teacher or relative maybe?

How Have I Changed?

I feel that I've changed in a couple of ways in the last year. About a year ago I used to live on the streets with my mother doing drugs, not eating healthy, not knowing where I was going to sleep, and being paranoid thinking we were going to get raided.

So from a year ago, I've started going back to school, eating healthy, and living in a real house. I'm glad I've changed from the way I used to live. I'm happy with the way I live now. Living on the streets is not the way to live!

-Rosa, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: We're happy to know you're off the streets and living healthy. That's a big change from a year ago. Can you imagine what changes you'll go through by next year? What changes would you like to make? And the year after?

About a year ago I used to live on the streets with my mother doing drugs

"I Wish I Never Saw Or Heard"

Only Twelve

I wish I was at home because I would be getting ready for school and I'd be getting ready for church on Sunday. I wish I wasn't in here. I'm only twelve and I want to go home because I miss my mom.

-Maurio

From The Beat: We hope that you will use your time as a learning experience and grow from it. How can you make sure that you don't put yourself in the same predicament in the future?

Let's Keep It Rolling

I wish I never heard of my aunt's and ninjas' dying. I just heard yesterday that my patna died on the radio. RIP Too-Too. Or I wish I never heard of the block going dead!

-Kudah Black

From The Beat: Why are there so many deaths? What is the cause of all this? Is there something we can do? How can we end it, bring peace to the neighborhood? We have to. RIP to all those gone, too soon.

I Wish I Never Seen Money

I wish I never seen money, because I got addicted to it. I started to sell drugs, I started to rob people. I started doing evil things for that money, till one day — it all caught up with me, those evil things.

I tried to get some doll-la-la's, and I got arrested. It's cool, 'cause when I get out, I'm going to get some doll-la-la's! But right now I'm in jail, writing The Beat, telling 'em how I feel about getting some money.

Soon as I get out, I'm'a rob the President. And after I rob him, I'll spend five thousand dollars on some purple. Then I'll send him a box of weed roaches.

-Danny Boy

From The Beat: We know you're joking about the President, but that attitude of planning to pick up where you left off before your arrest is so clearly self-destructive that we're amazed you won't even think about change! It will all catch up with you again, only next time it might be the Pen'. Think your life through again.

RIP Tip-Toe

I wish I never heard that my OG patna Tip-Toe got killed because it really hurt me a lot inside and out of my body. It's not the first time I heard or saw someone get killed, so it kinda faded away with all the rest of my thoughts that go through my mind while I'm locked up.

So a lot of things come and go, but he will always be in my mind, heart, and soul until the day someone lay my casket down.

So last but not least, Rest In Peace Kenny Mack, Ronnie Easily, Miguel, Tip-Toe, loved by many, hated by few, and respected by all.

-Lil' Guan

From The Beat: It's painful; it made you feel hurt, why? Why is it that it hurts so bad when one of homies gets killed. Is it that we think our homie suffered? Or is it the loss that we are experiencing? Could it be fear – that we are next? What do you think? We mourn with you. Why do so many have to die, so young?

I Don't Like Jail

Sometimes I wish that I did not do the dumb things that I did because I do not like jail.

-Lil' Turk

From The Beat: How can you make it so that you don't come back? What did you learn from this experience?

Where I Was Raised...

I was born in the South, but I was raised in Oakland. When I was growing up, I saw a lot of stuff like killings and shootings. I wasn't raised with a father, so I had to be the man of the house. I never saw my dad, so that was hard when I was growing up.

I never really had a father figure, so my mom had to take care of me, but like people say, "Your mom can't teach you how to be a man."

-Chad

From The Beat: Your mom can't teach you how to be a man, but can the lack of a father teach you that in the future — you wanna be there for your kid(s)? Who is being the man of the house while you're locked away? Think about that.

When They Took My Uncle Away

Well, I am going to write on today's topic: "I Wish I Never Saw or Heard" — I wish I never seen the police take my uncle to jail on a warrant!

He seen the judge, and the judge gave him eight years at San Quentin. He was there on his second strike. I thought about him a lot when I was home.

I remember when they took him away. He said, "Don't you ever go to jail." And I promised him I wouldn't. But guess what? I been in and out of Juvie for the past two years!

It's like drugs come looking for me, all the time. I got to go, so you know: Peace to all in the Hall. Keep your head up.

-Lil' Happy

From The Beat: Once you've used drugs, they will come looking for you. When you leave Camp on your home visit, your old friends think they're showing you love when they lay out those hot tracks, for free! But don't you believe it's free, 'cause you've been paying a price that can't be calculated in money — your uncle will tell you, "It's calculated in years, sonny."

I Do and I Don't

I wish I never saw or heard a lot of things, but then in a way I don't. I wish I never saw or heard violence.

Yet on the flip side, it was good 'cause then I could prevent it myself — not all violence but a lot of it, like abuse upon a female! I'd never do that!

But as far as fighting and getting in trouble, that's just a part of life. So that'll always be in my life. Stay up Hall patnas. We all gonna be on the outs again, fasho'!

-Adogg

From The Beat: Despite your obvious intelligence, sometimes you don't make any sense! You're glad so many females get abused, so that you can protect a few! And who are you protecting when you're on lockdown? Maybe yourself, from being trouble's clown. Why do you go where you know trouble's bound to be found.

My Cousin

I wish I never heard that my cousin Terrance was
shot and killed
due to some ancient shhh years ago in a
basketball game.
And he died two days before leavin' to go to
college on a full scholarship.

-Monroe

From The Beat: We hate to hear this kind of story, and unfortunetly we hear it too many times. It is such a tragedy. Don't let this experience get you down. Continue to reach for a better life, educate yourself, and always treat people with love and respect. You never know how long we will be here, alive. RIP Terrance.

It Was Hard To Hear You Died

Man, I had to be in the Hall when I heard my ninja died. Man, I wish I was out there for you man. It ain't the same without you gone. I wish you were here instead of being dead.

-Missing you

From The Beat: Yes, it's better to be locked up than dead. Did his death teach you anything or did he die in vain? How can you make sure that you don't fall victim to a similar tragedy?

I Love You Mom

I wish I can sit down and talk to my mother because she calms me down, and because I haven't seen her in two days. I love my mother very much.

-Khalid

From The Beat: How can you and your mother make up for lost time in the Hall? How can you make the best of your time in the Hall?

My Heart, Lost

When I was real little, my father hit my mother — and I was mad! I went to my room, got my bat and tried to hit him, for hittin' my beautiful mom in the face!

When I was fourteen, my best friend had died when he was only fifteen years old. And the way he died: Him and some girls went to the lake for three days. Somebody pushed him in the water, and they knew he couldn't swim — so he went to the bottom of the lake.

I hope the judge don't sentence me to CYA, 'cause I never went to Camp or a group home yet. So I might get to go to Camp. I'm praying that I do.

And it's true that some people come in and out of Juvenile Hall, but I been here for while — I'm not trying to be in here for too long or be on the corner. I'm trying to finish school, so I can leave Oakland and go on to college to make my mom happy.

My mother is the heart of my whole world. And we need to show our moms that we love them so much! We need to learn more about them that they didn't want to tell us, because we were too young.

-Lee

From The Beat: Those that return to incarceration a second time, will more than likely be back a third and a fourth, a fifth time and so on. Those who after that first time incarcerated get the message and change how they live their lives on the outs — and we don't mean tighten up their game or hustle on the down low, but go to school, get a job, avoid drug and alcohol abuse — those are the ones who stay out of the system. And make their moms proud. And wherever you go in the system, focus on your education and building good work habits.

Them Girls

Man, I wish I never saw them girls I saw. If I hadn't seen them girls, I'd be back on the block right now, kickin' it with all of my homies. Man, them girls got a ninja caught up. I was just joking with the girls, and they called the police on a ninja, and now I'm locked up.

I'm glad that I'm locked up because it's teaching me a lesson: Think before you do, and don't end up in the system. When I get out, I'm gotta life my life positively and I ain't never comin' back here, ever! What up all my ninjas on the block doing yo' thang. Also, what up to my auntie Bobby, doing time right now. Keep yo' head up.

-Dex

From The Beat: We say a lot when we're locked up, but when you get out, you got to make sure that you follow through with what you're saying. How can you live your life more positively? How can you make it so that you don't come back?

I Wish

I wish I never saw my mother smoke coke.
I wish I could meet my dad.
I wish my granny and friend I lost was still here.
I wish someone cared for me besides my girl and baby.
Damn I wish I never had a baby to tie me down.

-B-Animal

From The Beat: You've been through a lot, but it isn't the struggle that defines our character, but the way in which we deal with our struggle. Keep yo' head up and be the father you never had to your child.

"I Wish I Never Saw Or Heard"

Saw Something Shady

I saw my friend Deshawn get shot in his face, and it wasn't because he was a bad kid. He had a job and his GPA was always a 3.0 or higher. Matter of fact, he was on his way to work when he got shot and it was all because these guys I messed wit', you feel me?

They was whipping a ninja's ass and when he pulled out his gun. It had went off and hit him, just as he got on the bus, and that was the shadiest shhh in the world when he had died. It hit me hard, so I will get good grades and play basketball and hold him down on TV. One love to Deshawn.

-Dev-Dee B1

From The Beat: This situation, and your friend's death, are truly tragic. Living the best, most honest life you can is the most wonderful tribute you could make to Deshawn's tragic death. Therefore, we're impressed that you say you're going to deal with it by getting good grades and playing basketball as a way to live the life that he was unable to live.

My Homie Got Shot In The Face

A while back, me and my God-bro seen the big homie get shot in the face. Now we be cool on hangin' out. Shhh like that was not meant to go down, but we just got to watch out for haters. My block lost a lot of people. We got to be strong. When you up, someone will always try to bring you down.

-William B1

From The Beat: What you saw, your homie getting shot in the face, must have been terrible. Has his death changed anything that you do or no longer do? How? Is there a way for you to show strength without holding it down for the block? A strong man would work to cool the beef instead of inflating it — will you be able to be that strong?

My Homie Died Right In Front Of My Eyes

The thing I wish I never saw was seeing my homie Moe Dosia die right in front of my eyes. That I really wish I never saw, and the thing I wish I would of never heard was that he died, because the only reason that happened was because he was supposed to rob someone for his valuables. But I say screw that, and screw that dude who took him.

The person who I witnessed in a casket was my older brother. He was killed in the year 2000. He was only sixteen and he would have been twenty right now.

I was very mad when the judge put me as out-of-home-placement because my mom said that she couldn't handle me at home, so now I'm going to Walden House, where they wear tight pants.

The thing about my homie being killed was that I saw him running after he got shot and he said to me, "Oh, no!" like he didn't believe that he was shot in his face, and the cold part about it was that he never tell in front of my house and the police and the ambulance came fifteen, twenty minutes later. The effect that it had on me was emotional stress, a lot of anger built inside, and wanting much more than revenge.

-Treze B1

From The Beat: We're so sorry about your friend's death, Treze, and your brother's. You have our hearts. What lessons have you learned from their deaths? What can you do to avoid their pathway to early graves? Do you think that your mother was completely wrong to tell the authorities that she couldn't handle you being home? Do you want to go home and live with your mother when you get out? If so, how could/can you make your living in her home easier for her?

My Uncle Was Shot And Killed

One time I spent the night over at my friend's house and the next morning, when I went home, my mom told me that my uncle got shot at and jumped through the back window of my house and he got shot once, but then he told my mom to let him out through the garage. The next morning the police came and did an investigation. A couple of months later, my uncle was shot and killed.

This affected me by hanging around the wrong people, because the person who shot him is one of the people I hang around.

-Mark B1

From The Beat: Man — what a tough situation: your family member is killed by someone you hang with. Does this incident make you question the people you've been hanging out with? How does it feel to know the person who killed one of your family members?

YGC

I wish I never saw or heard of YGC, because all it does is pump people's heads up who've been in here three or four times, so they think they hard, but they're really not. Plus people in YGC like to gossip like little girls, straight female tendencies. That's why I wish I never saw or heard of YGC.

-J-Money B1

From The Beat: We've all seen the folk who return to YGC, feelin' harder on each go around. What will it take for you to make sure that you don't have to return to this environment? What will it take for you to get out and stay out?

"That Person"

Hubby

That one person I wish I could sit down and talk to is my big bro Jay-O 'cause he is one of the people who made me who I am today.

He taught me a lot about life and street smarts. I could go to talk to him about anything that was on my mind. He also gave me a lot of respect. I also wish I could talk to my other big bro Dre. He also showed me love and respect.

When I needed someone to talk to, they were there to comfort me. RIP Jay-O and Dre.

-O-Nasty B5

From The Beat: Having big brothers that really look out for you best interest is a luxury. It saddened us to hear how much influence they had on you, and then hear they're resting in peace. How have you dealt with their absence? Keep your head up because they might be looking down on you.

Talking To My Brother

I wish I could sit down and talk to my brother. I haven't seen him in a couple of years. He passed away September 11, 2000, a victim of homicide. I wish he could be here to take care of me and give me advice.

-Chinatown B2

From The Beat: Man, we're sorry about your brother, Chinatown. What kind of advice do you need? What do you think he'd say about your current case/situation? Do you ever try "talking" to him in your head? Maybe you could even write a conversation you'd like to have with him for The Beat.

My Girl

The person I would most want to talk to would be my girl, because in here the only way I communicate is through mail.

I wish we could just sit down and talk about things for as long as we want. Instead, I have to wait until I get out which ain't that long so we'll still have that talk. I'm out, much love to all.

-Diddy B5

From The Beat: We envy the maturity you have for being able to write a piece about your girl without being too vulgar. It's sweet of you to just want to 'talk' to her. Would you feel the same way if you were out? Why or why not?

Talking To My Mom

I wish I could sit down and talk to my mom every day so she can encourage me to stay strong and do what I have to do to get out of this hellhole.

My mom is the most important thing that I have in this world, and if I lost her, I wouldn't know what to do. I probably would go crazy and lose my mind, or I'd probably be in the pen' On a serious charge, but it's a good thing that she's in my life, so I guess it's all to the GOOD!

-Lovell

From The Beat: We hope you tell your mom how much she means to you. Do you talk to your mom every day when you're on the outs? Does she give you advice that can help you stay out of this hellhole? Will you take it this time?

My Girlfriend And God

The person I can talk to is my girlfriend 'cause it's like I can talk to her about everything. And I can talk to God. And like when I'm down and out, that person I would like to get off my back is my baby momma 'cause she always talking trying to tell me what to do like I'm a kid. I hate that for real.

-Young Slim B4

From The Beat: It's cool that you've got a girl and God to talk to, but while we feel the stress that comes from your baby's momma, you do owe her support in raising your child. If you step up and act like a man, maybe she'll stop trying to tell you what to do.

That Person

That person I want to be with is my husband, M. I love him so much. I miss him so much, but he thinks I don't love him because I won't kiss him every time he try to kiss me I would turn my face and say I don't know how to kiss. I just wasn't ready. Yadamean? He think I just say that to be sayin' I love him a lot. But I do love him a lot. Keep ya heads up.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: If you're not ready, you're not ready, so good for you for being true to your feelings. If this young man is interested in you for you and not just for kissing and more, then he'll wait. If not, he's not worth it anyway.

My Girl Understands Me

The person who I would like to be next to that I can talk to is my girl, because she's been through most of the stuff that I've been through, so she can kinda understand where I come from when I do something wrong.

But the one person I would like to get off my back is one of the staff, but I am not going to put him on front street.

-B. Love B1

From The Beat: It's wonderful that your girl understands you, B. Love, but why do you mess up so badly that you have to spend months in Juvy when you could be home with her? She probably needs you home. Can you understand her? Why do you think staff is on your back? How can you continue to maintain your cool?

My Sister

That person would be my sister Sadie, who passed away. She was my best friend when she passed. I felt like going wherever she is now. RIP.

-J-Money B1

From The Beat: It's so sad that your best friend, who is also your sister, passed away, J-Money. Can you live your life in tribute to her by doing all the things that she wasn't able to accomplish in her short life?

"Wasted Time"

In Here

I feel like I wasted time in the last three-four months, because this is my third time in here for stupid reason. But it seems like every time school starts I always end up in here. Like when summer school started, I came in here Sunday morning 'cause I had a warrant because I violated my probation.

But when I get out, I plan on going to school. Yadamean?

RIP to all my homies and love to all in Juvy.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: It sounds like you've planned on going to school before, but it hasn't worked out. What are you going to do differently this time?

I'm Wasting Time

I am wasting time in here 'cause I'm being charged for something that I didn't do. Instead, I could be out on the block, or just on the outs, and really be doing something so I can be here for a reason, or I could be in school or at work, but now I'm in here wasting time.

-Clumsy B2

From The Beat: Clumsy, you write about a few things you could be doing rather than sitting in the Hall, but thinking that you could be on the outs doing something that would make being in the Hall legitimate is really scary. We understand what you mean, in a way, but what do you think it will take for you to decide to do things on the outs that it make it almost impossible for you to be out in the system?

Being In Here Is A Waste

I think being in here is a waste of time because you can't do anything but read and stuff. But if you think about it, if you keep reading and learn more than you knew being in here, you can get ready to go back out and change something about yourself, because when you're sittin' around on the outs just smoking and drinking and doing stuff, that's a waste of time, but sometimes it's fun.

So when I get out, I am going to try not to smoke or drink, so I'm going to build myself to go out there.

-Jb B2

From The Beat: We really like this piece because it feels like we're watching your brain weigh things out. Like you write, being locked up is a lot less exciting than hanging out on the streets, where smoking and drinking are fun. But despite the fun, you know those activities as wasting your time, too. What else is fun to you on the outs that isn't a waste? Could you start small by chilling at home and reading one day a week instead of hanging out every day smoking and drinking? Could you find a friend who likes to go to the movies or watch videos sober? We wish you the best in your better future.

Time That I Have Wasted

Well all time that I have wasted in Juvenile Hall I could have done things like be with my family, my lil' lady or the homies from the 'hood. Some days when I am in my room I think that right now I wish I could have been like some people, just come in and coming out, and they are here for three or two but I am here for weeks and months and that feels bad.

Well when I just get to slanging rocks, committing crimes and smoking weed with the homies and drinking but all the time, I go to school but I was messing up with the influences of the street gang. Well that's all Beat and I'll see you next week.

One more thing, RIP Marliano and Nicoyita.

-Lil' Ghost B4

From The Beat: Are the streets a big temptation? Have you asked yourself, "Is it worth it?" it seems like you have made a trade, the gang life for your freedom. We hope when you get out, you will always keep the time you have wasted in the Hall with you as a reminder that will help you to keep yourself out.

Could Be Doing Something Else

I feel I have wasted so much time because I've been in here for two months and a couple of days. I think I could have been doing something, but instead, I'm in here wasting time, waiting to go to Glen Mills so I can waste 18 more months of my life.

I guess it's good that I'm waiting, because maybe where I'm going will have a good impact on me. Maybe I'm not wasting my time. I'm just preparing for the next move I'm going to make in my life. I hope it's a better decision, one that will better my life and my situation. I'm out.

-Young Sam B2

From The Beat: As folks have probably already told you, how much you'll get out of the programs at Glen Mills depends on how much effort you put into them. If you're learning good, productive things, you're definitely not wasting your time, no matter where you're learning them. When you think about your future, how would you like it to be? Give us the details.

This Is All I've Got

I done wasted hella time in dem streets — going day by day like it's a party or something, 'cause I could've been done with my high school by now.

But instead I'm hella far behind in school just because I wanted to be in dem streets getting my hustle on. And the time I been here in juvie is a big waste of time. This is all I got for this week.

-Whiskey B5

From The Beat: Does being aware of the fact that you're wasting time right now motivate you to do the right thing? How so? If not, what will it take for you to get out and stay out?

I Ran Away From My Problems

Wasted time: all through my life, I've always been the one to run away from my problems. When shhh got tough, I always gave up. That was with school, friends, family and home. I found myself fallin' behind and losin' my home and a lot of close people, and I still didn't learn. I found myself on the streets with a drug habit I couldn't support.

It wasn't 'til I got fed up with having no stability and ran from the challenges that came with life that I realized it's a waste of time and I have to change my life before I fall more behind.

-Double D B1

From The Beat: As long as you've learned now, you can always work hard and catch up, Double D. Don't get discouraged, just do whatever you need to do, even if you're tired, bored, if everyone is out playing or hanging in the streets. If you work at whatever you need, you can do it! What are the first steps you need to take to change your life? What sacrifices are you willing to make to get there?

My First And My Last Time Here

I have wasted a lot of time while I have been in here. When I get on the outs, I will go back to school and get good grades. I will play sports and go to parties. I will never come back again. This is my first and last time here.

-Sean B1

From The Beat: Right on — if you're smart you will learn all the lessons Juvy has to offer and you'll go home, never to come back again. What's it going to take for this to be the only time you come to Juvy?

It Really Hurt

I think I wasted time in here because I could be doing something either positive with my time by going to school or out there trying to get a job. I really wasted my family's time, but I didn't really notice until I came here. My family wasn't messing with me — they didn't visit me or answer the phone for two months. It really hurt. But after those two months, I really didn't care if they visited me or not — I just had no feelings for nobody.

But when they send me to Napa Handah Boys Center, it's going to be a different story. I'm not going to waste my time, because after the year at Hannah's Boys Center, I'm going back to live with my sister, get a job or play football for Galileo.

-J-Money B1

From The Beat: Why do you think your family hasn't visited or taken your call? Are they punishing you? Do they know you wish they'd visit? Have you called or written them and asked them to visit? How are you going to maintain your resolve to get out, get a job or play football?

"Weekly Writings"

Working Hella Hard To Get Me Out!

I don't really got much to say, but I have court on the eighth and I might have a chance of getting out with an ankle bracelet. But I might be going to a group home, 'cause my PO wants me to go but I have a lawyer and two case managers who are trying hella hard to get me out.

I already talked to them about how I'm gonna change when I get out, because they want me to prove my PO wrong about sending me to a group home, and I'm really gon' prove him wrong when I get out.

-Btg B1

From The Beat: Sounds good, BTG. You must have figured out that whatever you did to mess up on the outs totally isn't worth being incarcerated for, and you're right. We hope they give you another chance. If you got out today, how would you start your new life? How would you go about proving your PO wrong? If you do go to a group home, how can you keep your head up and keep striving towards making it back on the outs?

Whatever It Takes

The thing I want to do when I get out, I'm going to try harder in school and start playing more sports. I'm going to do whatever it takes to get off probation. When I get out I'm going to do my best to not come back to the Halls and start being respectful to everybody.

-J-City B1

From The Beat: Sounds good, J-City. But, you know, you can start being respectful to everybody right now in Juvy. What kind of sports do you like to play? Do you play for your school and/or at home, or in a nearby park? What do you like about school? What's it going to take for you to get off probation?

My Future

I want my future to be like . . .

When I get out I want to finish high school and my diploma and go to college and play football or basketball, so I can support my family and have a good life.

-J-City B1

From The Beat: What's it going to take to make the future you want happen? What steps can you take now to start along the path towards the future you want?

"Wasted Time"

Wasted Time

As I sit here in this dump, waitin' for my ROP release, the time while I wait doesn't count. So I'm just sittin' here wastin' my time.

No matter if I'm waitin' for six months, the time don't count. So as you can see it's just wasted time.

-Lil' Vell

From The Beat: The time may not be recorded by the courts, but how can you make this time work for yourself? How can you make the time beneficial? Read and educate yourself. Be cool.

Wasted Time

This is my first time here, but I know I could be in school, getting' ready to graduate, and go to my Senior Prom.

While I was slangin' rocks, I could've been getting' my career started. I love to sing and I've just wasted my talent.

-Miniona

From The Beat: That's true. But your chance isn't over. Stop slangin' rocks, go back to school – it seems so logical, to get your life back together. Don't you think? It's obviously easier said, than done. But, it's possible. You can do it. Just look at the reward. Now take your time in the Hall as a little time-out – and never come back. Okay? Now's the time to plan. How are you going to change your lifestyle when you get out? You know what you got to do.

Locked Up

I am locked up and they won't let me out!

I wasted hella time in here because I could have been out there gettin this money and gettin these witches on my team.

-Kudah Black

From The Beat: Why are you in here? Are you talking about being out there getting money, the way the will bring you right back to the Hall? You know, money that comes fast, goes fast. Is there something that you can do on the out's that wont bring you back? Be productive. Don't produce something that can be takin' from you like that. What can you do? Is there another path you can go? Do you have options? Is there a path that you can see down the road 15-20 years, with a nice view, a nice future? Where is your life going?

Makin' This Time Work for Me

Wasted time... my whole life has been a waste now that I look back on it. These past six years have been a blur. Ever since I was twelve I've wasted time, valuable time. I went to school to make money and holla at females. I wasted time on the block.

The only time that caught my attention was how to make money faster. Fast money came with that life of crime and all that leads to is wasted time. I got over a year of time served in the Hall at the Y and I'm still servin' time so now I concentrate on makin' this time work for me. Educate yourselves and do this time and don't let this time do you.

-Termite

From The Beat: You know what, maybe you didn't waste your time. If you learned something, even if you had to find out the hard way, it was probably worth it. Now that you do realize that the stuff that you were doing wasn't getting you anywhere then you can flip your life around. If you don't then your whole time would have been a waste, but you already seem like your mind is right. Stay focused and strong young soldier!

Wasted So Much Time

man i wasted so much time down i can't call it
i wish i was on the turf counting gees
but i was in the hall gettin' no sleep
now i'm in camp wastin' six to seven of my life
why'd i hit that lick an' went down that night
i been wastin' time in my life
like messin' wit' girls that can't get right
messin' wit' ninjas that don't give a what
get money all day an' smoke yo' weed till it all gone
wasted time 'cause i didn't give a what
now i wish that i didn't
'cause i can't waste no time in the camp

-Moe Butter

From The Beat: It's not just the lick you hit that night, but all the licks you were hittin' that had you thinkin' it'd still be all right — just one more crime, one more time, one more night. And it's not even about droppin' a dime. You need to change your line of work. Give up the grind, hittin' licks, doin' time — no more dirt!

Years Wasted

i have wasted so much
time because of
the choices i made
i have been here
five times
four for robbery
and one for a warrant
i wasted so much
time of my life
coming in and out of here
i wasted about
three or four years
now i have decided
to change my life around
because i'm tired
of living this life
i will not waste time
no more

-Lil' June

From The Beat: To waste no more time, you need to make up your mind — and follow through! No more smoking the park, foo'! Join NA (or AA). Go to meetings. Raise your hand and announce that you need a sponsor. Get phone numbers and use them.

I am a multi-sports player and rarely have time for my little brother, but yet I always find time to end up here.

Wasted Time

I've wasted a whole lot of my time. I am a multi-sports player and rarely have time for my little brother, but yet I always find time to end up here.

I feel so bad for that but it keeps happening. I don't know when it would stop but all I can do is keep wishing and hoping it's soon.

-Anyoto

From The Beat: Why does it keep happening? Come on now; coming back and forth to the Hall, is a big fat waste of time. Stop wishing and start planning – how to stay out of the Hall. If you fail to plan, there's only two paths that you will go, and you wouldn't like either one of them.

All of This Was Wasted Time

All of my time has been sitting in the Hall. Man, I got a girl who want to have my baby, but I am locked up and can't get out.

See I could be doing a number of things. It's like this — time is money; an' to make money, take' time! I could be painting the town, going dumb! I could go to my girlfriend's house an' be kickin' it.

I could be starting my Spanish class at college, an' really lookin' to see what is it that I need in order to be a good house owner. See, to bring out the real, if I had stayed in school, I would speak four different languages — an' still be a thug, but just more smart than I am now, feel me.

I have been wasted too much time, an' I plan not to waste no more. I'll get out, give my girl what she want' an' what I want – an' that's a kid. An' just to live a good rightness life! But all of this was all time wasted. The system took four-and-a-half years of my time, an' all they did was wasted it.

So when I hit the 'hood, it's all cookies, 'cause I am gon' go an' be like double-oh-seven, untouchable! So that's how my time was wasted, an' I can say that no more time will be wasted — 'cause time is per money.

-Bandits

From The Beat: You always give us the yeah-but's, like — yeah but, if you go back to making your money on the grind like you did every other time you got released; why do you think it will end any differently? What you mean by "live a good rightness life"? Do you mean to make your money with a regular paying job? You talk about college; do you have your GED and/or high school diploma already? We know you're smart, but we've found the square/thug always winds up with a broken heart, 'cause the thug side believes his own lies, so refuses to realize the inevitable consequences of compromising the square's success plan. Then thug or square, he's on lock up again!

Waste of Time

With all the time I spend being locked up behind doors, I could have finished high school, been working — had a house, a LL, and my ID, some kids. My whole life would be a lot better right now.

Here I get told what to do all day, every day. Wake up from out your sleep, and to things like that! I can't wait till my real TR, so me and my family can spend time together. I want to be with all of them and enjoy my nineteenth birthday!

-George

From The Beat: We hope you have a great nineteenth birthday with your family! Just take your life one step at a time. Get a GED or high school degree or both; get a job; get a driver's license. Enjoy being young, responsible and free, 'cause you don't need any babies to feed, not yet.

Wasted Three Months

I've wasted a lot of time in Juvenile Hall, three months to be exact. I've wasted my whole summer here, as well as events and birthdays of my loved ones.

Being here has took a lot of things away from me in addition to my time. To me, it seems as if time in here stands still; and on the outs, it just keeps going, never stopping, like it feels when you're waiting to get out. But when I do get out, I'm going to stay out — for my sake, my family's, and my loved ones'.

-Adogg

From The Beat: We cut your final turf call "... for life" — and when we couple that with your commitment to continue "fighting and getting in trouble" as you put it in another piece this week, we wonder what exactly your plan to stay out might be? It's not a say-so thing, it's a do-so thing — what will you do to stay free?

Wasted Time

I could be with my baby momma during her pregnancy, helping her in her time of need. I could show my daughter the difference between a good ninja and a bad one.

-B-Animal

From The Beat: Well, get your butt out there and be the man you wanna be! What do you think is the difference between a good ninja and a bad ninja?

Wasted a Year Here

I have wasted a lot of time being locked up in Juvenile Hall. I wasted a year up in this shhh!

And if I had been out, I think I would have been going to school and playing basketball. I could have been spending a lot of time with my girlfriend. I could have been with my family, my mom and dad.

I might have been smoking a lot of weed, because that's something that I love to do! But while I was smoking weed, I could have been learning more on the outs than I am learning in Juvenile Hall.

-Funk

From The Beat: You'd need to tell us more, if you expect us to believe you can smoke weed and be learning. We're not saying the Hall is a great place to learn, but you still can read a book and remember it. Can you do that while you're smoking weed?

Once More

As I walk through this door once more, I wonder how this reality came to be. I never wanted this, but I am a product of my environment.

Please tell me why, before I die. I look to the sky. I'm a victim of these circumstances.

-E

From The Beat: And sometimes you are, we all are, a victim of circumstances we've created for ourselves. Where do you fit into this scheme? Surely some of the responsibility was yours.

Trying

I try to earn wings
but I think I grew horns.
That's why mc watches me
flowing like the waters
of the Mississippi River.
My lungs give up on me,
Sometimes, I feel like
I'm bleeding on the inside.
But I ain't scared to die
so let's roll 'em all out.

-Oscar

From The Beat: This is a good poem Oscar. Only poems can say so much with so few words. Good work. Good writing.

Waste

The money I've spent
made a loss in my life.
My lungs are as gray as
stone.
The bones in my body
have left me with fear.
The smoke I've inhaled
has made my teeth rot.
But the knowledge I've
brought in has left me
with love.

-Marci

From The Beat: Smoke will enslave you but love can save you. Nice writing. Thanks.

It's Possible

It is possible, I suppose,
to stay home
do good
with probation and mom
and mina and tom
don't run away… stay

-Gwynne

From The Beat: Nice job Gwynne. And yes, it is possible. But you have to want to do that, or at least, make up your mind that you'll do it, even if you'd rather be doing something else.

Clean for 12 Days

I was in my room 5 days straight, sleeping. Haven't done dope in 12 days now.

I came down, gained about 8 pounds, and now I await my court date. I may be going away for a while.

-Cherie

From The Beat: We bet you feel better and we hope you've said goodbye and good riddance to your nemesis.

My Daughter

Wednesday, September 1, 2004 – 6:11 am …

The morning my daughter was born, I was taking a shower in Juvy. Who's the one to blame? No one but myself.

-M

From The Beat: It's a moment you'll never forget. Look at it this way. You were washing the past away. It's a new world now. And you have to make it a better world. You have a daughter who will grow up in it.

Waste

The numbers, all the people dying for a color,
all the money lost, spent on drugs.
And the sky polluted with all this filth
and our lungs filled with fear.
Our wings won't develop due to
common difficulties, like
the smoke over our heads
falling from the sky.

-Jackie

From The Beat: Powerful poem. We really like that 4th line – our lungs filled with fear. What do you think it would take to get a breath of fresh air in your life?

What's The Point?

What's the point of living a life full of jealousy, hatred and sorrow? Sometimes I catch myself asking this question.

Damn, I don't want my children to go through life like this. I fear for them, even though they are still seeds. God help me pull through this trifling life.

-Tonio

From The Beat: You've been going through good changes Tonio. You keep it up and do not give up. This will be behind you soon. We know you're going to do well.

Wasted Time

I have wasted time on my hands, and more of it to do.

Kicking it with my homies, trying to make each day pass, second by second, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year.

And believe me when I say I'm doing years of wasted time, for false accusations. But I'll still keep it real.

-Sean

From The Beat: Whatever time you have to do, you can spend it wisely. Time is our true wealth. Don't waste it; use it.

San Luis Obispo

The Most Awesome Father

Yes, when I need someone to talk to, my father will listen to what I have to say. He is an awesome father. Anything I need he gets. He loves me so much and needs me for many reasons.

I treated him and my mother so badly and didn't care, but now that he was almost ripped from me, I realize I want to help him, and love him even more. I couldn't have handpicked a better father. Seeing him in the hospital bed was a big reality check. It scared me, and hurt to see him like that. So my responsibility is to take care of him. I want to do what will make him happy.

-SarahKay

From The Beat: We're happy you don't take your dad for granted anymore. If he hadn't gotten sick, would you have had your change of heart? Does it take something like almost losing a loved one to realize how much that person means to you? What will it take for you to keep appreciating your loved ones before they are gone or sick?

Good And Bad

Some say there's good
Some say there's bad
Some say they care about you
Even when you're bad
You go through life without giving a damn
You say you care about me and what I do
Where were you when I needed you?
If you care if I live or die, prove it.

-Eric

From The Beat: Can you talk to this person and let him/her know you are hurt and disappointed by the way they treat you? If not, can you build a relationship with someone else you trust and depend on? A family member? Teacher? Neighbor?

I Promise

I promise I'll straighten up
I promise I'll shed the same tears as you
I promise I'll go through good or bad with you
I promise you're the only one in my mind when
I'm lying in my cell
What I think is I wish I can tell you what I promise

-Eric

From The Beat: Those are some big promises. Realistically, will you step up and stay true to your promise? How? We hope you're successful.

Success

Success is people who change their lives around. It is like a goal. To be a success, you would have to stop going to jail and get off of probation. And just get a job and have a happy life. A happy life is a good life.

-Steven

From The Beat: A happy life is a good life. Can we get an "amen"? So, what's your next step toward happiness/success? How are you going to keep focused on that goal of happiness?

My Anger

Hello, I know what it feels like to be abused and all. On March 3 of 2004 I was attacked by my dad. Well, it is sort of my fault 'cause I pissed him off yelling, "Why don't you call my damn PO," and that pissed him off, and he went in my room and put his hand to my throat and yelled, "Why don't you use your smart ass so I can beat your ass."

This happening to me makes me say to myself, when I have kids, I won't do this to them. Also, I hope this doesn't happen to my two sisters whom I love very much.

-Daniel

From The Beat: Domestic violence leads to all kinds of pain and ugly actions. Since you don't want to do this kind of thing to your kids, what would you do instead? Have you seen other parents deal with similar situations in a better way than your dad? Put yourself in his shoes, what would you do — take away a privilege? Give you extra housework?

Life

Life is an important thing
Everyone has a place in the world
Some go through life the hard way
And others use the easy
When you try in life you succeed
When you do the wrong thing
You're gone from your important place in the world

-Eric

From The Beat: Interesting point. Do you think some people have to try harder than others to succeed? How hard do you have to try to be considered successful? How hard have you tried? What is your important place in the world?

Time

Time is what some people take for granted. Time is what we should slow down, instead of living in the fast lane. Slow we should kick it instead of being locked in a room of darkness. Time, that's what it is to me.

-Alex

From The Beat: When you're on the outs, do you live slow or fast? If you died tomorrow (we hope you don't) would you think you have spent your time well?

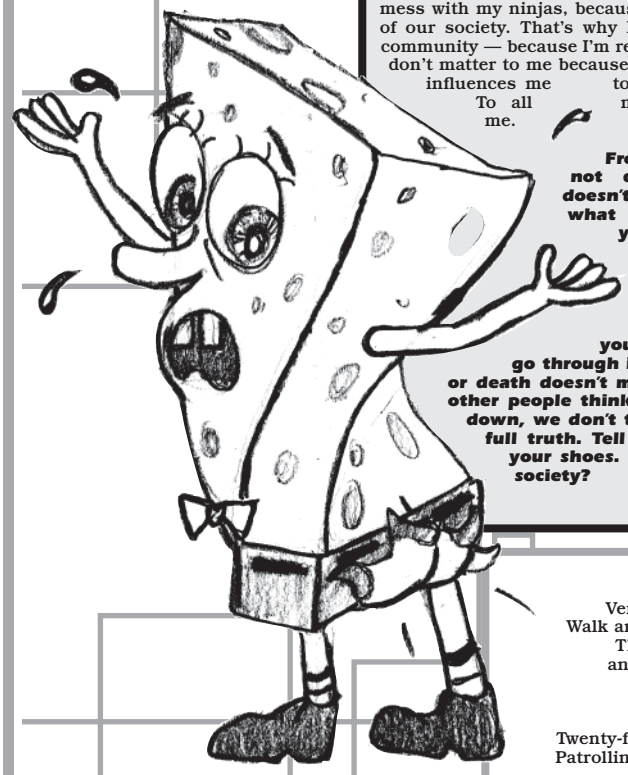
My Lifestyle

People don't understand people's lifestyle. They talk behind their back because they're living a bad life. Don't judge me if you don't know me. That's why I really love my ninjas, because they understand what I'm going through. Like when people ask me if you scared to die, I be like no, because the lifestyle I'm, people don't know shhh.

I wish people can just stand in my shoes for a day or two. I hate it when people judge me. I try to change my life but people don't believe me, that's why I say forget them and go mess with my ninjas, because they understand the struggle of our society. That's why I got so much love around my community — because I'm real, and life or death matters but don't matter to me because of my lifestyle. My lifestyle has influences me to a strong strong mentality. To all my loved ones: I love y'all —feel me.

-Tyrelle B4

From The Beat: Tyrelle, we're not convinced that you're life doesn't matter to you. But even if what you're sayin' is true, have you thought about what your life means to those that you love? You may not cherish your life, but we can tell you cherish your love ones — so what do you expect them to think or go through if you end up dead, since life or death doesn't matter to you? We know that other people think you're being real, but deep down, we don't think you're coming with the full truth. Tell us what it's like to walk in your shoes. What is the struggle of your society?



Doing Time

Man this time shhh ain't cool — being away from the outside world, being able to do what you wanna do like go to school or get a job or talk to your parents and friends, do positive things.

But in here, under supervision, being told to do something by someone else that cares but doesn't, wearing someone's clothes that you don't even know where they come from, years past still got the same shhh drawers, old holy socks, faded ass shirts, eating off the same trays and sporks others ate off. But time ain't cool being under supervision.

-Mizerable Me B4

From The Beat: If you know it ain't cool being in the Hall, under supervision, wearing someone else's clothes and underwear, being told what to do, will you think twice before you act in a way that can land you back in here?

Goodbye To My Angel

It's been good bein' with you. I don't know what I would of done without my angel. I thank God every night for blessin' me wit' such a pretty woman like you, but now that you is gone, I don't know what to do wit' out you.

I know you will be back to me one day and you'll make me complete once again. Goodbye to my angel.

-Noriega B5

From The Beat: Goodbye to your angel, but hello to a young man with a great heart. This is your time to get yourself right, so you can get out and be a better man to the one you love. Are you up for the challenge?

Maintaining

Verse: Everybody gave it a doubt
Walk around wit' my name in they mouth
Thought I wasn't gone sprout
and maintain on the route
But now I'm all about
The Benjis
Fake ninjas envy
Twenty-four seven on the block so dingy
Patrolling all the work on the first like a pimp be
Run up in yo' house on a drought so empty
Girls want bucks when I spit sixteens
Money green
fifty on rims is so clean
Ninjas ask me why this dope game is uncut
And why I'm at the prom in a tee and not a tux
Hook: I can't believe
Man, just how we be
Everybody know we hustlin'
You know we hustlin'

-M-Burna B5

From The Beat: Why must we be so quick to glorify the dope game? Why don't we use our minds? Why must we confine ourselves to slow pain through selling cocaine? We wonder why we get so much attention from the police. It's because we're hot, drawing too much attention to ourselves — highly flammable like propane. Bragging about how we rearrange wigs like Rogaine. When, in the end, challenging our own minds should be our domain.

Falling In Love

We would travel the world hand-in-hand
And I would never leave you
'cause with you is where I stand.
We'll be like Bonnie and Clyde and say screw da world
And in your arms I'll be when my nights are cold.
I sit in my room and tears fall down my face
Damn this is where I met you, up in this place.
Now I'm leaving to Colorado at 3 or 4 am on Thursday
And I will take you with me 'cause you'll be in my heart and thoughts
I guess I'm falling in love.
(Dedicated to Louie)

-Alicia GU

From The Beat: We wish you all the best in Colorado. And, although Bonnie and Clyde had an exciting romance, we hope yours is great and less gangster.

I Wish I Never Saw Or Heard

I wish I never saw my big bra lying on the floor with a bullet in his back. I wish I never got that call from the hospital telling me he was dead. I wish I never saw him in that casket. I wish he was never dead. RIP Scharod.

-Hurt B2

From The Beat: That must have been a terrible sight and maybe even a worse phone call. Did his death make you more wild, or did it make you think about changing your deadly lifestyle in for a safer one? Knowing what you know now, do you wish your big bra had lived his life differently?

What The Judge Said

I wish I never saw or heard the judge say that I am going to Glen Mills for a hot min, 'cause that shhh can't help me, because when I do the time, I am going back to my block and thug and do the shhh I was doing when I came in here, so let me do my time and get back to doing my thang.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: We wish you were interested in making an effort to build a new life for yourself, and maybe you will become interested at Glen Mills, but if you have no intention of changing your mindset, maybe you should tell the judge to send you to YA or the adult system right now and let someone go to Glen Mills who will take advantage of the programs they offer.

My Whole Day Was Messed Up

I remember when I was at the schoolhouse one day and somebody hit my phone saying that my patna got killed. The weird thing is that I had just seen him less than twenty-four hours prior to the incident. It's like my mind went blank, and my whole day was messed up.

-Afro B4

From The Beat: Your whole day? Man, it's messing up our whole day just to hear this, and we imagine it messed up quite a bit more as he was your patna. How did you deal with the pain you felt?

Going Back

Man, the boys in here think they too sick for me 'cause one minute they be cool, then one person says something to you, then they say something to you. But to me, this stuff is nothing 'cause I am from a block that is the most hated, so a ninja know not to come step to me that way. All I know is, I have to go get this time over so I can get back to thuggin'.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: Not much to say to this except that we hoped you were smarter and had more love for yourself. You really make us sad sometimes.

Never Heard That

I wish I never heard that my cousin got killed, because when I heard it, my heart broke because I love my cousin. RIP Cousin "Dan" aka "Fresh."

-Roderick B2

From The Beat: We're sorry about your cousin. Do you think you can live your life in a way that won't lead you into position where people dislike you enough to kill you? Will you need to change anything about the way you're living now?

Wit' My Family

All the time I was hustlin' and doin' my thang, I really should have been wit' my family. Now that I'm locked up I wish I can be out there wit' them spendin' some time wit' them. Man, I feel so lonely wit' out my bra and sis.

-Noriega B5

From The Beat: A lot of people take their family for granted. Do you think you're guilty of the same thing? How will you treat them differently when you get out? We hope you keep your word.

I Never Should've Learned

if i never saw and never learned how to do
— a crime — i think i couldn't never been in here
but the choice was made and i got caught up
and now i'm in here and now i'm locked up

-Lil' Crime

From The Beat: When the consequence of crime makes your life worse, put the process in reverse — and learn to free yourself from a criminal's curse.

Game

doing time for a weak lil' crime
we suppose' to be out on the grind
i need some purp' to please my mind
i'm 'bout to lose it doing this time
but i'm keepin' my head up i'm fine
i'm finna make this money
just drop that dummy
tie it up like a mummy
i'm so sick of this shhh
ain't a thang 'bout it funny
the town is my home
i would never disown
i love you bra
keep y'all head up and be strong
i'm out

-Hk

From The Beat: You smoke purp' to disguise the world outside your mind, 'cause when you think clear you know you're in here for your life on the grind and not just that one little crime. You never know where and when and what for, but you know you will get caught up once more — and again after that if you go back. In the end, you trade away your life for a sack and a lil' stack.

Life Is Not A Game

This is to the people who took lives
What if you had kids, and somebody took your kids life?
You'll be ready to kill
I will
But, you know what?
You know
You think late in that cell
Wish well
You didn't feel
Thinking
I'm going to hell
Now you're not praying to God so much
Shhh, running through your head
Feel like you was dead
You know what?
These staff, judges
Think they're God
And there's only one God
One Jesus
That could judge you
They locking you up for life
Trying to judge
You ain't going to make things right
Remember, there's one God
That can judge you
Not the judge down here
The one up there.

-Lil' Teane

From The Beat: Lil' Teane, we want to know, how does your god judge you?. What do you think? The judge down here has the power to decide what happens down here. But, how do you think your god, sees your actions? Did you or do you have no other choice, than to choose the path that you go down, or making the decisions that you make? What kind of behavior does your god see as punishable, and what kind of punishment is suitable. What do you think – about your God and yourself?

I Never

i wish i never
heard or seen
the police
because they tryin'
to accuse me
of a crime i never
did commit

-Simon

From The Beat: Stay strong.

Go Home

I wish that I could go home but I got to wait on 'em. They taking so long that I'm starting to stress over that. But one thing I'm going to do is go to school and listen to my grandmother, to try to be a better young man.

-Lil' K

From The Beat: We wish you the best of luck with your future. Can you use this as a learning experience?

Get Thei' Game Right

My name is Lil' Mama. Y'all probably have seen me on the outs and it's hard for me to leave the streets, but it is almost 2005 and people need to get thei' game right.

I first got caught up hanging with the wrong people at the wrong time, and being at the wrong place.

-Ella

From The Beat: Ella, sounds like you need to get yo' game right. We love you, but it really upsets us to see you back in the Hall. You have so much potential. It's hard to leave the streets, but look around you – look at some of these older girls. Do you think any of them are going to spend their whole life in and out of jail? Do you want to be one of those girls? Now is the time to take your life seriously. It's hard to leave the streets – we know. But look at the alternative. Jail ain't easy – is it?

Rest In Peace

Once I heard that you was gone,
That made me feel bad
I know if you were here right now,
you might have been going dumb
I still love y'all and one day I will see you
when I hit heaven
Rest in peace to all

-Laron

From The Beat: Gone but not forgotten. We all die, but first we all live. What can you do to save yourself from an early grave?

That Person

I would love to talk to my boyfriend right now and tell him how much he has scared my life by hitting me. And since he is tryin' to get help, I want to let him know that I won't give up on him.

-Miniona

From The Beat: Good for you. Never allow someone to abuse you. But, leaving that person isn't always the right answer. If you do – who will he hit next? BUT, since he has taken the first step to get help, you are doing the right thing by supporting him. But, always remember – Don't ever let anyone abuse you! You are too good to let that happen. You can ONLY help those who choose to help themselves.

Down Right Now

for you that down
right now in rita
keep yo' head up
it don't hurt for long
you know you go'
touchdown soon

-Lil' Booda

From The Beat: Your words of compassion are coo'! And when you touchdown free, be what you need to be, to stay free, too.

How I Came in the System

I stole cars, sold weed, beat people up, hit a police officer, ran away from home, and now I suffering for all those cases. I'll be out soon but all of that will still be a part of me until I'm eighteen and close my juvenile record once and for all.

I would say by hanging wit' a bad crowd would influence you to doing all of the above. You have a choice about who you hang wit' or if you wanna wear protection wit' her or not. No matter how pretty she is, it ain't worth it.

-B Animal

From The Beat: You seem to be a smart dude with a good head on your shoulders. But why do we have to learn the hard way? How can you make the future a good one for you and your daughter?

Yvette

All I'll ever need is you
To kiss away the tears
And wipe away my frowns
All I'll ever need is your love
To help me through my lonely nights
And make me smile after a long day
All I'll ever need is
To hear you whisper softly
"I love you"
In my ear
When I wake up in the morning
And before I fall asleep at night
To make my life fully complete
I love you Yvette.

-Krustler

From The Beat: Aww, to be in love. Yet, another reason to keep yo' ass out the Hall.

In Jail

I think in my mind, being in jail for me is a waste of time. I'm not really a person that gets in trouble all the time, but I do like to enjoy myself. But the things I do too in my free time ain't really productive.

-Some Dude

From The Beat: Now, has being in jail taught you anything? How can you have a good time without getting in trouble?

So Many People, So Little Time

There's so many people I want to talk to,
But there's not enough time for me to tell them all,
I want to tell my momma all the things I want to do,
And teach my brothers how to ball,
Tell Rosie I love her with all my heart,
Tell my cousin Justin to stay safe,

-J-Boogie

From The Beat: This is a nice piece. Short but sweet. In your next piece share what you want to tell them. We'll publish it, you'll share it, and mission accomplished.

My Sister

The person I wish I could sit down and talk to is my sister, because she is my mother figure in my life today. And I regret not listening to her, but now I know, and my ears are open to her 24/7. Whatever she say is done.

-Monroe

From The Beat: That is a great love that you have for your sister. What is it about your sister that you admire? What would you say to her, if you could talk to her right now?

When I Get Out

When I get out of here, I'm going to go to school, I'm going to play sports, and I'm going to take care of my family and myself.

-Kenneth

From The Beat: You have a good plan. Tell us about your favorite sport. How will you take better care of yourself?

Talking About My Brother

one day i was walking with a friend
and we were talking about my brother
and she said that she found out
that he was shooting up —
that was the same day i came here

-Solow

From The Beat: That was bad day. Do you think she's right?

weekly writings

Who's What's Do's Don't's

who's what's do's don't's
don't apply to me
drink alcohol smoke weed
not to mention
crystal ain't a thing

-Picaso

From The Beat: Famous last words! Ya heard?

Jail

I wish I never saw or heard about jail.
I wish I never been in jail because I don't like tell my friends, brothers, cousin, about jail.
I wish I never heard about the real jail.
I don't care about nobody else in the pen.
I wish I never saw or heard.

-Matthew

From The Beat: It's truly a sad thing to know about life in jail. But you can't go back in time. The point now is to take what you know, and let it guide your future. You know about how horrible incarceration can be, so plan accordingly. Walk away from this experience smarter. Don't let it take you down.

From the Bottom to the Top

to my one and only boo
i always say i am a pimp
but i always say forget it
'cause i will always love you
and you will always be my baby girl
always want me to rub your feet and back
while we soak in a bath full of roses
but i hate it when you talk about
your old boyfriend our friend
keep it real i am the best
so won't we go far away
and had a little tommy
me and you soaking in a hot tub
full of roses in a big house on the hill
trees and roses and a big backyard
with our little baby boy
'cause me i just want to spend
my whole time with you
always my one and only boo
(to you and little tommy too)

-Tommy boy

From The Beat: This poem is sweet, full of dreams and love that's real. But yeah, forget that whole pimp deal, 'cause that's no way to show love, ya feel! And get off the grind; put in some time to get your HS degree or GED or both. And get a job with a future, one that will suit her — and you and your baby boy, too!

I Want Out

i could be working on my trade
so i have something to live for
that is why i want to get out
and i want to make some money

-Solow

From The Beat: What's your trade?

Weed

Hey Beat, it's Luni, and I wish I would have never heard about all that weed and brew at my homie's spot, 'cause then I would have never went and got caught up. I am out.

-Luni

From The Beat: It's never too late to change your ways. Do you think maybe going to a rehab will help?

Word to the Wise:

The time I've wasted, wasn't wasted at all; I just thought that.

-Tydiallmighty

From The Beat: Tell us more about your time.

Time Gone By

i hate hall time
it goes by day after day
never stalling never quitting
in a perpetually circular way
surely by now
i'd have more than a few cars
but instead i'm in here
set back extremely far
as the world on the outs
keeps turnin'
my mind keeps yearnin'
for all those blunts
on the outs i'd be burnin'
just chillin' sippin' a bottle
with my patnas or girl
doin' what i do
in my own little world
but all that was cut short
when i came to the hall
no more burnin' no more sippin'
none of that at all
because i'm stuck in this place
and keep asking myself why
maybe the snitches
maybe the cops
but still no reply
but in the end
there's gotta be a reason
and that fasho' ain't no lie
but for now all i think about
is the — time gone by

-Adogg

From The Beat: Yeah, there are reasons, lots! But you're looking in the wrong direction when you blame snitches and cops. Don't you know they're part of a game of criminal money and fame which was just the bait. 'Cause the game is all about the pain, we thought you knew— it's not just the savagery on the street, but the time you do. You seal your fate when you just can't wait to chase the dream of hustling cream. You think it's your own little world, full of cars and blunts, fast money and girls — oh no! Don't go — straight back to the trap, 'cause that's the reason you keep coming back, here. Your thinking is the reason. It should be clear. Every player gets played by the game till he's ready to make a change.

What I Hide Inside

i got some aggression
that i'm suppressin'
it feels like compression
i need to start expressin'
and give my confession
before i go into depression
because of my impression
of my obsession
for what i'm possessin'
with no discretion

-Rimer

From The Beat: We made up a name, 'cause your rhyme was nameless; with a pseudonym, your confession can be shameless. But maybe next week you'll want to claim this. 'Cause rhyme and truth fused — is a formula that can't lose!

One More Chance

i have one more chance
to do the right thing
i will do the right thing
because i'm getting tired
of my old ways and i'm
not scared to admit it
so this time i am going to
do the right thing

-Lil' June

From The Beat: Telling the homies that in order to change, you can't smoke and you can't kick it at the park anymore; yeah, that admission will take courage, and more to stick to it! Just do it!

The One

you are the one for me and only me
the one true girl that takes me to ecstasy
your beautiful eyes and nice soft lips
the smoothness of your skin when i caress your hips
yes you're sexy and no one else
like the first intriguing book found on the shelf
so i'll be out soon with a few more rises of the sun
but i just wanted you to know melissa baby you are the one

-Adogg

From The Beat: Your eloquent lyrics are smooth as ice cream, but being out soon isn't all she needs. Go back to the grind and you'll do more time away from her as well as the rest of your world.

Talk and Don't

I would not want to talk to the authorities in a bad situation again. If I could talk to anyone right now, it would be my lovely girlfriend, Melissa — I love you!

-Adogg

From The Beat: What would Melissa have advised you to do in your "bad situation"?

Pimp My Time

i'm still waiting to go to camp
but i'm going to pimp that shhh for them five months
then i am go' be back on the berkeley streets again
you know smokin' them purple blunts poppin' them thizzles
so i can be thizzed then freak out and get me
a bottle of that hennessey privilege

-P Daddy

From The Beat: If that's the best plan you have, then the best you can do is — get free, get high, and come back one more time!

Change Back!

the only thing i want
to change
is all the homeboys
to get together
like the old days
everybody started
to separate when
one went to juvie
then the others
ain't the same
with all the homies
drinking and smoking

-Lil' Shorty

From The Beat: You spit a mouthful of truth in one short poem!

Welcome Back

welcome back
welcome back
i don't smoke crack
drink yack
pills hurt my back
on one boy in the 'lac
holla back
now it's hall time
lima bean
i'm nice not mean
psych (sike)

-Big Pierre

From The Beat: Don't change, and that's what you'll be — psych'd out of your mind, finding yourself back here doing time!

Stay At Camp, Do Your Program

Hey, best friend! What's up with it! Me, nothing, just can't wait until I get out. Well, I'm hella bored up in here.

But you better stay at Camp and do your program and don't cat off and run — 'cause six months ain't nothing. Plus you'll get home passes to see friends and family, feel me? I'll write you when I get out.

-Lil' Mama Hanna

From The Beat: Friends support friends in doing the right things, and that's exactly what you're doing. Very coo'.

Baby Mama

The person to me is my baby momma.
Only she knows the truth about me, and how I feel inside.
Only she understands
what I go through and why I take care of problems the way I do.
And for that, I'll kill for that girl. T
he mother of my child,
the gas to my engine,
the brains behind my muscle.

-B-Animal

From The Beat: How can you be there for your baby mama? Is she enough of a motivation for you to change your ways? What are some lessons that you want to instill in your child?

My First Home Visit

Man, four months in jail — that's messed up! But this first home pass after that time served, was one to tell about.

When I first got home, I got into the shower, dressed, then went on my way. I had my cousin pick me up, and we went to Hilltop to mess with some females — but they weren't my type.

Then after we left from there, we went to The Dragons for the rest of the night. Then, on Monday, I spent the day with my family. It was cool! And now I'm at Camp. Man, so much to do next weekend!

-Champaco

From The Beat: Was Sunday night the annual state-wide gathering of the The Dragons Motorcycle Club? Police and club members said all the trouble came from the crowds in the street. What did you see? And tell us more about your family time.

Finally Here

well here i am at camp
i've finally arrived
it's not all that i expected
but i made it alive
closer to home
as well as to my girl
a newfound territory
but still in this world
only three weeks to wait
and it's coming so fast
then after my six-month program
at that past i will laugh
this here life is not freedom
but it's far from the hall
at least i get home passes
instead of being confined behind walls
and my girl my love
whom i've been waiting to see
soon i'll release
long hard months in ecstasy
after my time served
i'll get back to my life
no more hall no more camp
no more inmate hard strifes
so to all my ninjas in the hall
stay up 'cause you'll soon be released
just change up your game so you won't
come back to this system i call "the beast"

-Adogg

From The Beat: You've been in the mouth of the beast, behind its clenched teeth, but you've never even seen inside its belly — where you'd never want to be a celly. So do more than change up your game, if you mean get tighter with more of the same. But find a legitimate way to make your pay; and finish up in school, so you can advance your career; and stay cool far from here.

My Life

my life it scandalous
because i'm a real ninja
not the way i act
but the way i get down
my life can be cool sometime
or it can be painful
my life ain't right
because people won't let it
my life have a good personality
with my parents
but still my life ain't right
sometimes i feel like my life
it a wrap —
but god is holding me up
i don't know when i gon' to drop
so i continue to pop
but the way my life is
it go' to be right
r i p isaac, cory, tony

-Lil' Lee

From The Beat: You say people won't let your life get right, but you need to cut those people out of your life; or if it's people who aren't in your life, then just walk right past them day or night. If you can learn not to fight, you can get your life right. But if you keep popping E's, well, that's why they call addiction a disease!

Man, That's Scandalous!

'Sup Beat? This your boy, Culero, kicking it. So, man, I finally got a home visit from Camp.

The first day was hella weak. I went to my homeboy's house an' they were telling me that my girl, Brenda, was messing around with another dude. An' I was like, "Aw, man! Ain't that shhh!" An' hella other shhh!

So then I decide to call her, and she was bee-essing, saying that he was trying to holla at her. But I think it was bee-ess! But I'm all cool with it, 'cause I ain't got to be all that mad — 'cause I would've done the same thing, too.

But she ran back to me! An' she was messing with dude for only two weeks. Well, that's what the homeboys were telling me. An' I ain't sweating off dude, but I ain't gonna speak on him no more.

And the next day, "Holy Jesus Christ" — man, I didn't even want to leave, but my day ended for me. I had to go back to Camp. I was hella mad, but oh well. Next weekend I will continue my fun. So till next time, I'm out. One.

-Culero

From The Beat: Some folks just want to trip with the wrath of heaven, even when it's the same life that they've been living. They cry if they get judged, but they're quick to judge and hold a grudge. We're not saying you didn't get mad and curse, we're just saying you didn't go from bad to worse. And extra props for making it back to Camp despite all the drama, and on time, too! That says a lot about you and what you know you need to do.

To These Cupcakes

What's happenin' wit' all my East Bay homeboys? It's me, Young Gato. I want to say all these foo's writin' about females are some cupcakes.

I mean, I got my females on the outs, but that's on the outs. The way I see it, is what the hell could a female do for you when you in here? Write you letters, send pictures, talkin' 'about how they waitin' for you. For all you know, she out there doing her thang with anybody and everybody. And don't say, you know your girl, you don't know shhh.

I'm about bangin' I could care less about a female. I'll choose my homeboys over a female any day, you know. I'll never let a female get hold of my heart, because they will do you dirty in the long run. I never depend on them either. I take care of myself, feel me!

All these fools out there trickin' with these females like some suckas. Shhh, never in my life, you know. Well, till next time, homeboys at Camp and in the Hall, stay up. Alrato.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: We wonder what makes you so bitter toward women? Your mother's a woman, right? But maybe you think any and all feelings of love, want, need, affection, loss, separation, are chinks in your armor. You better let some light in, or your heart will choke on the darkness.

Maintain the Game

What's up? What's good with ya? It's me Young Gato. Well, I'm just posted up right here in max, lettin' the days go by.

As for me and the homies, we were two deep, but now I'm solo bolo. But I'm still holdin' it down by myself, 'cause it's nothin' to a boss, feel me! You see, I just isolate myself from all these suckas and J-cats in here.

I still bust down on the yard like a G, 'cause that's just how I do it. I keep myself strong and structured, you know! And like I said before, you could take away my freedom, but you can't take away my pride.

So to all, stay strong and don't forget who you are and what you are. Keep your head above water. This young homeboy is checkin' out for now. Till next time.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: Every week you sound more and more like a homie on the yard with no freedom to look forward to. Maybe it helps keep the pain off, but don't let it become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

AKA Baby Doll

One day I went to the-love-of-my-life's house, his name is Efrain and he lives in Oakland — and I walked into his room and saw a girl laying in his bed!

I got her by the hair and woke her up and got that slut gone! Because that made me really mad, 'cause that's my man. She just didn't have anywhere else to sleep, but I don't care. I love him!

She's coo' though and she's pretty. But I'm a lot better than her, so it doesn't matter how coo' or pretty she is! I want to marry him and to have his children. The end.

-Krystle

From The Beat: You just put down the meth pipe, plus you just violently expulsed another girl from Efrain's bed — so, please, don't be in any hurry to bring children into a situation like that. Nobody belongs to anybody else, love is a giving of oneself.

Never Going Back

the hall — ha — what a joke
a place where they keep kids
confined without freedom to choke
i'm glad to be up out of that fo'sho'
i didn't plan to be out this soon
but it happens you know
but one thing that won't happen
is me going back to the hall
pluck the staff pluck the food
pluck those concrete walls
but this is what i say
i'm never going back
and if i do — lord
strike me down till i may lay down flat

-Adogg

From The Beat: It's easier to wish for death than it is to draw breath and work toward change; but that's what you need to remain out and free. You're already planning to choke back smoke, but can you do that and school and find a job so you won't be broke — 'cause if you don't, you know you'll go back to what you promised you won't. And then you'll be in the Hall, writing The Beat about how you swore you'd never fall. Don't try to play it slick, like so many at Camp — or you'll be back quick.

Finally At Camp

Finally I am here at Camp. I have waited one month and a week to get here.

At first it was going slow at the Hall. Then when I was there for a while, time started to pass by. Now I am glad that I am here, because I am one step closer to staying home for good.

I get my first home visit on September twenty-fifth. I am really lookin' forward to that. So far I have not got in any trouble — and I am going to keep it that way!

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: So far so good. How do you plan to spend that first home visit? And what's you plan for staying home once you get your final release? 'Cause if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

Why

Why did he have to die?
Why did Dirt have to be locked-up for his anniversary?
Why did my ninjas go dumb without me?
Why did they rec without me?
It's like they forgot about me?
Today, August 31, I cried.
Why? 'Cause Lil' Ant died.
Rest in peace. Lil' Ant, it don't stop.

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: A lot of times things happen and we don't know why. But just make sure that you don't fall victim to an early grave. How can you make a better life for yourself? Look at Ant's young life and tell us what you think he did wrong? We do not even know him, and we pretty much can give you the reasons why he is not here today, and that's a shame.

My Brother

i would want
to talk to
my brother
about the problem
he has been having

-Solow

From The Beat: He needs to talk to someone soon.

Come to Camp and Don't Run

What's up, Beat? Me, Nick, here at Camp, just writing to say — what's up and be cool!

And for all those coming up to Camp, don't run and just wait your three weeks before you go home! It's cool up here, and once you start to go home — it goes by hella fast!

-Nick

From The Beat: Thanks for the encouraging words and the good advice. But don't just do your time, or your time will do you. When you go back to school, study and learn something, too.

What It Do?

what it do bra
what it do bra
what it do
this jail stuff is hella weak
what it do
it's snitches out on the loss
i'm telling the truth
what it do
what it do
i really ain't got nothing to say
stay strong keep ya head up
it will be cool
what it do
we did many things
and didn't get caught
when this happens
thangs gon' get to clapping
what it do
i might start rappin'
can you hear the beat slappin'
what it do
i gave bra the dappin
last time i did it was in the town
before dude was gonna fall down
let him know not to go underground
what it do
i'm still from the town
i'm ready to bounce
go grab an ounce
what it do
i got this thang i'm gon' do
it's cool ya down
it's gon' set our life straight little ends
it's all jesus
what it do

-Hk

From The Beat: Every time you did it and didn't get caught, it kept you going till you did. It's a set up that won't let up till you can't get up from leaking in the street or 'cause you're locked down and wishing you could write in The Beat. Can't blame it on snitches, it's just the game, gets played that way like clouds drop rain. Maybe as a kid you didn't feel its pain, but from now on it will never be the same. So don't buy that ounce when you bounce, unless you just can't wait to be back behind locked doors and gates. Time to awake at last and break free from your past.

Holdin' It Down

Holdin' it down
What's up Beat Within?
Just holding it down
Hoggin' it.
Stay up.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: How are you holdin' it down if you're locked up? You don't make any sense!

Oak-

land of the homicides
it's getting ugly
ninja stressed out
like yo' baby'mama' tummy

-E

From The Beat: The rest of your poem, glorifies what's wrong.

She's Waiting For Me

ohh the day i will fly
is soon to come
that's why i will pimp camp
and not think to run
she's at her house
waiting for her man
to give her what she needs
to feel free in our land
on my first home pass
she'll be with my mom in her car
her beautiful hair and body
i'll be able to see from afar
she needs me so bad
and i want her too
and ohh i can just imagine
the things we will do
maybe a bottle
or maybe two
but whatever we shall have
it will be between us two
so doing my time at camp
i'll make sure i stay legit
because i'm just waiting for the day
she and i are feeling it

-Adogg

From The Beat: Sorry but here and there we had to twist and tweak, to make your words appropriate for The Beat. But you know you need to do your program for just for you, then when you're released, no matter what — you'll be coo'.

Shady

I be cryin', no one hears me. I feel like my life is one big dream. I was with my brother Molly. Now it seems like I'll never see him.

It feels like my family broke up. I'm here in juvy, he in Santa Rita. Don't know when or how I'm gon' see him. I just want to say, "Free him!" Ninja getting life, for murder. I can see fifteen or ten years, but life. Judge ain't God. God is the judge, then man made words. What? What is it? That's shady.

I guess 'cause we ain't livin in the hood. Then they wonder why people do what they do. Because 5-0 stay comin', accusing you for something you didn't do.

-Lil' Teane

From The Beat: Lil Teane, we can't explain why these things happen in life. We wish there was an explanation for everything. And we don't really have control of the past. All we have control over is our future. How can you create a better future for yourself and for your family? Is it possible to maintain a relationship with your brother while he is locked up? He could really use your support right now. What do you think?

Waiting To Get Released

i can't wait to get released
hopefully to the rich county of marin
at least i won't get in trouble there
like i get in trouble in oakland
so hopefully i won't be here
this time next week

-Lil' Hot Sauce

From The Beat: Don't know if you'll get to read this, but we wish you all the best!

My First Time In The Hall

My first time in the Hall is not cool
Now I wish I would have listened
To what people were telling me
Because know I'm locked up,
And that's not cool
When I am on the outs,
From now on I am going to be cool
Because when you're in the Hall,
it is a waste of time,
but it makes you think
And I just can't wait to get out.

-Charles

From The Beat: We hope that you follow through with what you're saying and never come back. What is your plan for when you hit the outside world? Do you have one? If you don't have a plan, get on it soon.

Hard Times

What's up, Beat? This Booda talking from Camp. All y'all in trouble right now that feel like ain't no way of getting out of it — just pray to God and see what He do for you! Ask Him for help.

-Lil' Booda

From The Beat: Don't forget to ask God to help you stay out of trouble, too; to give you the strength to resist temptation and the courage to do what you need to do to avoid future incarceration.

So Many Things Going On

So many things going on. A lot of people dying in your homes. If not dying, they locked up or just got popped.

You know, you're locked up. People always saying how they 'stuck in the game. I don't understand. I'm a female, yeah, I bang, because my brother in the game. 2004, we going into war, you think a lot of people died. No! 2005. We losing a lot of lives, or locked up for life. Think! After you try, think twice!

But it's not too late when you should have thought about the situation.

-Lil' Teane

From The Beat: Do you fee like you are stuck in the game? – If not, how can you get out. These are some important observations that you made. If you can't get out, well, you know the alternatives – they're not so pretty.

Make a Difference

i feel like the world
is getting worse
and we need to stop
the violence
people should help
each other
and make a difference

-Kj

From The Beat: Amen.

They Got Me

they got me locked up
they won't let me — out

-Lil' Savage

From The Beat: You're at Camp, so be coo' — and you get weekends out, foo'!

I'm Out

I ain't gunna say I'm never coming back, but Lil' Teane was here. But I'm gon' leave.

Lately, I've been dreaming a lot. So much shhh going through my head. A few nights ago the feds was over my head. Nowhere to run, couldn't throw my gun. I really didn't like doing it for fun. Oh shhh! I can't believe I lost that gun.

My memories carry on -- The new me. Well those who didn't guess, oh well. Free Lil' Teane.

-Lil' Teane

From The Beat: Who is the "new" you? What is your life going to be like? You are about to be on the outs. So – what now? Do you have plans? You got to plan your future, especially now. Now that you've been in the system, if you fail to plan out your future, the system has a plan for you, and we are sure that their future ain't too bright. Ya' know! You're a smart girl. Stay away from here; we don't ever want to see you again! Well, not in the hall, anyways.

What's Up Beat

What's up Beat, I got locked up.
I'm here at the Hall again.
I got caught up on a home pass from camp.
Damn I hope the judge let's me back to camp.
I hope for the best.

-Krustler

From The Beat: Krustler, what's up? Don't come back! Don't get caught up! You know what your doin, cut that shhh out. If you want to come back and forth to the Hall, then you are on the right road. But, if you don't, which you shouldn't, well you know what you gotta do – or gotta not do. Make a change, a decision. If you don't the system will make it for you.

Wasted Time

I have been sitting here wasting my time for too long now. I want out. I don't want to go to CYA; I want to go kick it with my homeboys.

-Blacky

From The Beat: Blacky, your feelings are understandable. No one would prefer to hang in Juvy more than kickin' it with their homies. But what have you learned from messing up, getting busted and going to Juvy? How do you know, once you're free, you won't be right back into Juvy? What will you do differently next time?

The Boom Boom Room

My goodie's the boom boom room
Hanging out, chillin' just kicking it
Filling others waste of time
Desired feelings, passionate options
Expressive rules, goal settings, mandatory choices

-S

From The Beat: Nice use of word play, but what does this mean?

Depressed

As I look into the mirror
My fist slams into the wall
As the blood flows out through my cuts
Tears pour down my face
As I cry to myself
Memories of my life
Flash before my eyes
As I begin to die
My world comes to an end

-Guera

From The Beat: We know you've been depressed for a while, but you have everything going for you. You're bright, funny, pretty, kind, friendly, but you have to have some goal, some plan for your life. What do you want for your life, what do you hope to accomplish for yourself, as well as get married and have a family? Do you want to make jewelry, travel to Paris, swim in Cuba, get a pet dog, learn Spanish, make new friends? You have your whole life ahead of you. Do you trust life enough to know that it has huge, wonderful surprises for you? It does.

Raw Deal

I don't wanna ask
But I want to know
I wanna see and I wanna feel
I wanna know that you're the real deal
Do you heal me and at the same time
Kill me?
Do you make me cry, then make me smile?
I wanna know on the reals!

-Lil' Mami

From The Beat: Guys can drive you crazy at any age, Lil' Mami, but especially when y'all are teenagers. Many guys don't even know how they feel. Maybe this guy is just playing, maybe he really cares about you, maybe he doesn't even know yet how he feels about you. Why don't you and he give it some time? Let nature take its course?

My Breath Slips Away

My life in this world is so depressing
My heart gets broken
And my soul disappears
My love floats away
And my happiness sinks
My voice quiets down
And my breath slips away

-Guera

From The Beat: Beautiful, but tragic poem, Guera. You're an amazing poet. We know you're disappointed in love right now, Guera. But maybe there's more to life than partying, hanging with guys, etc. Since you don't seem to like school, or feel like getting a job, how are you going to manage? Who will support you? Do you want a career? You'd be great helping out teenagers someday, kids like you are now. Have you ever considered becoming a counselor? You sure have the beautiful heart for it.

Detained

I wish I never heard the word "detained"
'Cause it ruined my life and brought me the pain
Put me in my little ass cell
And gave me a name
Numba XXXXXX
From the Bay
Where the girls bend over and touch tha toes
Where the yay is sold
And the weed grows
Where we live by the gun an' die by the gun
Where we jus' chill on the block
And jus' have too much fun
This is where we live, the Bay
I'm done
Ya heard what I got to say

-E-Bunny

From The Beat: You may hate the word "detained," but read over what you've written and see if you think that the future you have for yourself won't bring you right back inside, E-Money! Who or what really ruined your life? How will you change your life, once you're free, so you'll be sure to never be detained again?

The Thugs

The three days I was out,
I wasn't even thinking about drugs
I wasn't even kickin' it wit' my homeboys and thugs
I was just taking it day by day
I no longer wanted to live life my way
I was listening to what everyone had to say
I was doing things right,
so my home is where I would stay
Then, all of a sudden, they took me here
Without a reason, that's why I have no fear
I know I didn't do anything wrong
So, hopefully, I'll get out of here and go on

-Lil' Mami

From The Beat: It must have been a shock to be pulled out of your life and be taken back to Juvy so suddenly, right? Can you straighten out whatever happened and go back to school? The sooner the better, because you don't want to miss the beginning of school. We hope we'll see you on the outs!

I Wish I Could Go Back To The Past

I wish I never saw or heard of Juvenile Hall or the Camp that I was in. Plus, I wish I could go back to the past and do something about the crime.

I saw my brother's casket and I had a strong feeling, but I should have showed them.

-Forgot To Sign

From The Beat: It's not really clear what you meant to write, or maybe you didn't get a chance to finish it. What should you have showed whom?

I Wish...

I wish I had a boyfriend who truly loved and cared for me!
I wish that one day he'll put a big rock on my finger
I wish I had a family
I wish I loved myself

-Guera

From The Beat: Do you also wish you had a boyfriend who you truly loved? Have you ever been in love? Remember, guys your age, teenage guys, are going through their own huge problems growing up — getting along with their families, going to school, getting a job, learning they have to rely on themselves soon, that they may not be ready to devote themselves to you. So why don't you manage your own life the way you want it and let them work through their lives? When y'all know more about what you're doing and what you want, maybe you can get together. What is it about yourself that you love and what don't you love?

Hurricane

Hurricane Carter is someone I would like to meet. He is an ex-prizefighter who served two years at Boy's House. He also served four years for armed robbery. He admitted to both counts, but then he was wrongfully accused of triple murder, and he was found guilty by an all white jury, and they gave him three life sentences at Trenton State Penitentiary.

He served ten years before the case was overturned, but the government still wanted him in jail, although there was no evidence to hold him.

-Saint

From The Beat: Ruben "Hurricane" Carter is a fascinating man, Saint, you're right. Once he was freed from jail, he started an "innocence project," with the people, mostly Canadians, who helped free him. Now people who feel they have been wrongly convicted can send his group their casework and if his people agree that the inmate has a legitimate case, they help set him/her free.

I Miss My Music

I'm still in here, supposed to get out next week. The thing that I miss is music, Bone Thugs and Harmony, especially. Also Woody . They make me sad to remember about them. I just sing their songs in my room and think a lot about their music. It's probably their words that they use in the songs. My favorite is "Wake Up."

But when I get out, I'm going to blast their music 'til my PO comes for me.

Today is my sixty-third day in this boring daycare. Maybe again I'll get out on Friday, but I'm not going to put my hopes up. When I get out I'm going to run if they try to put me back in here, because the judge said, "If you come back, it's placement." But I'll turn myself in some day.

-California

From The Beat: No. No. No. You're not going to scream your music when you get out and provoke anyone. Why don't you just decide you're not going to mess up anymore, and forget getting busted, coming back into Juvy, running from placement, turning yourself in, bla bla bla. Why don't you just behave? It's not so hard. Duh!

Tha One Person

I think about him all the time
There's something about him I can't get out my mind
Is it his looks or is it his smile?
Is it the way he licks his lips or is it his brown eyes?
Whatever it is, I want him to be all mine
He so "lil'," cute and adorable
He knows who he is, and hopefully he sees this
'Cause while I was out, he was da only one
I thought of and really missed
This is to you, from your Lil' Mami!

-Lil' Mami

From The Beat: Besides the outside of this dude, do you see anything nice about his personality? What can you both do so that you can stay out of trouble? Can he support you with that goal in mind?

El Juego

Yo estoy viviendo el juego de pandillas, el juego el cual yo he decidido jugar. Cuando yo empece a jugar este juego, fue cuando caí en este sistema porque aqui en la Juvenil conoci a homies que se que daron como mis hermanos. Ellos són homies que son parejos para cualquier cosa, y es por eso que empece a jugar este juego que estoy jugando, y el juego que me hace falta de jugar.

From The Beat: Esperamos que este juego no te lleve a perder más porque la verdad es que tu perdición es la que encontrastes cuando conocistes a esta gente. No seas tonto y date cuenta que estas equivocado con esta gente, porque si estas cayendo mucho en este lugar, quiere decir que estas son malas influencias.

The Game

I'm playing the game of gang banging, a game which I decided to play. I started playing this game when I first fell victim to this system because in Juvenile Hall I met some homies who turned out to be like brothers to me. Those are guys down for anything.

That's why I started playing this game that I play and because I am locked up, I miss not being able to play this game.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

I feel very bad for my family and me.

Lo Que Dios Ve Adentro De Mí

Cuando Dios me mira, él mira en mi mente, y él sabe que lo que pienso hacer está mal. Yo sé que algún dia Diosito me ayude a salir de aqui para poder estar con mi familia.

From The Beat: Esparemos que Dios adelante mire que este muchacho llegue a ser un buen muchacho, y que te ayude a cambiar tu mentalidad. Recuerda que no deberías de hacer nada malo, para que no vuelvas a estar aqui preso. Cuida bien lo que haces.

What God Sees Inside Of Me

When God looks down on me, He sees inside my mind, and He knows that what I plan on doing is bad. I know that one day, God will help me get out of here so I can be with my family.

-Conejo, Marin

Empecé Fumando Mota

Yo empece fumando mariguana con los amigos quienes eran un mal ejemplo para mí. Ahora no puedo dejar ese vicio y me siento mal porque yo no quiero andar más en pandillas. Es por eso que no quiero regresar a Honduras porque allá estan mis homies y yo sé que regresaré a hacer desmadres.

Mi papá es negociante en Honduras y el siempre me decía que le ayudará, pero nunca le hice caso y ahora estoy arrepentido. Mi problema principal es andar en pandillas y siempre le pido a Dios para no caer en lo mismo.

From The Beat: Bueno, tienes que dejarte de dos cosas, uno de dejar las pandillas, dos dejar de fumar drogas, porque ninguna de las dos cosas te van a llebar a algo bueno. Tienes que alejarte de las pandillas, no es bueno que tan joven andes desperdiciando tu vida.

I Started Smoking Weed

I started smoking marijuana with my friends who were bad examples to me. Now I can't kick back the habit and I feel bad because I don't want to be involved with gangs anymore. That's why I do not want to go back to Honduras because my homies are over there and I know I'll more than likely go back to my old ways if I return to Honduras.

My father is a businessman in Honduras and he would always tell me to help him out, but I never listened to him, and now I regret not doing so. My main problem is being involved in gangs and I always ask God to help me not stumble down the same road of failure when I get out.

-Marco, Marin

Soy Un Tonto

Me dejo llebar por las amistades. Yo sólo no hago las cosas que hago, lo hago con mis amistades, cosas como robar. Yo pienso que no es bueno dejarte llebar mucho por tus amigos. Por ejemplo, yo soy un tonto porque todavía no sé porque le hice caso a mi amigo para meterme a la casa a robar. Yo lo quería hacer. Me siento muy mal por mí y por la familia.

Aún espero que me perdonen. Porque la verdad es que no sé en que estabamos pensando. Quiero que Dios me perdone. Me siento muy apenado.

From The Beat: Nos agrada saber que has visto que no fue muy correcto haberte dejado llebar por tus amigos. Para la próxima deberías de hacerle caso más a las personas que en verdad quieren lo mejor para ti. Bueno, ya basta de reproches contra a ti mismo, lo mejor que puedes hacer es portarte bien y no dejarte llebar más por ellos.

I'm Dumb

I let my friends influence my decisions. I don't do things by myself; I do things with my friends, like stealing. I think that it's not good to let your friends influence too many of your decisions. For example: I'm a fool because I still don't know why I listened when my friends told me to break into a house and rob it, but I wanted things to go down like the way they did.

I feel very bad for my family and me. I hope they can forgive me because I honestly don't know what we were thinking. I want God to forgive me. I feel very remorseful.

-Anonymous 150 Crew

Ninguna Pandilla Es Buena

Lo que me hizo meterme en una pandilla fue haberme sentido muy sólo sin nadie quien me escuchara y por eso me meti con unos tipos que decían ser mis "homeboys." Ahora estoy aqui en la cárcel y me arrepiento de todo. Ninguna pandilla es buena. Ahora todo eso es basura en mi vida. Por eso estoy solo ahora.

From The Beat: Fue la decision más tonta que has tomado. ¿Quién te ha dicho que en una pandilla ibas a tener a alguién quien te escuchara? Si quieres atención, pídela, pero hazlo con la gente que realmente te dará buenos consejos y no te llebará al lugar donde te encuentras en estos momentos.

No Gang Is Good

What made me join a gang was I felt very lonely and I didn't have someone to listen me and that's why I clicked up with some fools that called themselves my "homeboys."

Now I am here, in jail, and I regret everything that I have done. There's no such thing as a good gang. Now all that crap is garbage in my life. That's why I'm by myself now.

-Flores B1, SF/YGC

A Una Jaina Que Quiero Mucho

Que ubo raza. Soy el mousie.
Este verso va dedicado a una haina que quiero Mucho
Tus ojos son preciosos
Y no hay más
Como tus labios de hermosos
Bonita eres, sí, no lo niego
Más que todas las mujeres
Eres como una rosa de Hermosa
Y tu cuerpo como mariposa
A media noche me dispierto
Pensando en qué estaras haciendo
Si estaras durmiendo bien
O teniendo pesadilla
me paro veo por mi ventana
Miro a las estrellas
Sonrío porque estan
Como tú de hermosas
Y bellas.

From The Beat: Por ultima vez, te vamos a poner este pedacito dedicado para alguién. Sentimos mucho decirte esto, pero nosotros no podemos imprimir cosas que don dedicadas a las persona. Si quieres dedicarle algo a alguién pofavor hazlo directamente a ella. En el Beat sólo ponemos cosas que pueden servir a toda al gente, no sólo para una persona.

To A Girl I Like A Lot

What's up my people? It's me, "Mousie"
This verse is dedicated to a girl whom I like very much
Your eyes are precious
And they're unique
Your lips are beautiful
I can't deny your beauty
You're like a beautiful rose
And your body is like a butterfly
I wake up in the middle of the night
Thinking about what you may be doing
If you're sleeping well
I get up and look
Through my window
I smile because the beauty
Reminds me of you

-Juan, Marin

Yo Comence De Esta Manera

Bueno, yo comence este juego porque yo andaba buscando trabajo por todos lados y no me daban trabajo porque era menor de edad y entonces fui por todos y sólo me decían que no porque era menor de edad. Entonces mi familia la tenía que mantener y así no podía, y entonces me tube que poner hacer cosas ilegales para poder mantener a mi familia. Que Dios me perdone por haber echo cosas malas.

From The Beat: Esperamos que Dios te perdones por haber escogido el camino que tomastes por tu desesperación. No importa que tan grande haya sido tu desesperación como para tener que hacer lo que hicistes. Esperamos que ahora que ya estes más grandecito, empieces a ver las cosas con más calma.

I Started It This Way

Yeah, I started playing the game that I play because I was looking for work everywhere, but nobody would give me a job because I was underage. That's why I went looking for work everywhere, but it didn't matter where I went because they all said the same thing: No, we can't hire you because you're underage.

I had a family to support, but I couldn't because I didn't have a job. That's why I started doing illegal things so I could provide for my family. May God forgive me for having done some many bad things.

-Soto B1, SF/YGC

Todo Comenzó En San Rafael

Todo empezo cuando recien llegue a San Rafael. Empecé a caminar por la cantona para nococcer homies nuevos y desgraciadamente los encotré pero fueron los homies equivocado porque sólo me enseñaron a hacer cosas malas como fumar mariguana todos los días, y pustiar puras Coronas. También con ellos empecé a ver como robaban carros para sacar una feria para cotorriar o comprar cosas. Poco a poco fui conociendo a otros gangster. Uno de ellos me enseñó a ver como corría el agua y como le tenía que hacer para safarme de cualquier pedo. Siempre andaba con él pero ahora él está encerrado y va para la pinta. Ese homie le dicen el Pewee. Ahora ya estoy aqui con algunos homies encerrado por cosas callejeras y de pandillas. Pero aún así, yo no me arrepiento de nada, aunque me vayan a deportar para México. Yo siempre estaré echando mi desmadre aunque esté en allá, pero tan pronto pueda me regreso a las calles de San Ranfael, para tirar lo que tiro, mi barrio.

From The Beat: Pues tienes todita la razón, te encontrastes con el grupo no indicado, con el grupo que no te llebo a nada bueno. Mira, lo que aprendistes no te sirvió de nada, tú tienes toda una vida por delante y no es justo que la desperdicies de esta manera. Tienes como olvidarte de estos caminos y de andar en pandillas. Ante la sociedad, no es bueno andar así, todo lo que uno hace es pasar la vida rápida, andar de vago y entre los mismos pandilleros quererse. Te decimos algo, eso no es vida, eso es algo alocado. Algún dia te vas a arrepentir de los errores que estas cometiendo y lo que estas diciendo, y querras cambiar y entre más te metas en más problemas más duro se te hará. La vida no es sólo juego, nosotros cuando estamos joven lo vemos así, pero no es así.

Eveything Began In San Rafael

Everything began when I recently arrived to San Rafael. I started to walk around the neighborhood so I could get to know new homies, and unfortunately, I did meet some, but they were the wrong ones because they only taught me to do wrong things such as smoking weed and drinking Coronas.

With them, I also learned how to steal cars to get some money and be able to kick it and buy things. Little by little I started to meet other gangsters. One of them taught me how things were like and how to get away from any problem. I would always kick it with him, but now he's locked up and he's going to the pen. We call him Pewee.

Now I'm with some homies locked up for street dirt and gang stuff, but still, I don't regret it even if they are going to deport me to Mexico. I'll always be representing my 'hood even if I'm there, but as soon as I get a chance I'll come back to San Rafael to claim what I believe in, my barrio.

-Smokey Marin

Mi Problema

Mi problema principal es la tentación del mal y las cosas que uno hace. Como por ejemplo mi problema es robar, pero yo quiero cambiar mi vida. Cuando yo robo, yo robo en mi comunidad que es Oakland. Robo en las calles donde todos los carros tienen buenos sonidos. Pero yo quiero parar esto porque por eso estoy donde estoy, en la juvenile. Yo quiero parar esto porque no me trae nada bueno. Cuando estoy en la juvenile pienso mucho y reflejo lo que uno hace cuando esta afuera. Estoy bien y voy a cambiar poco a poco, pero todavía voy a representar mi barrio pase lo que pase.

From The Beat: Tienes que buscar la manera como quitarte esos vicios tan malos que tienes en ti. No es bueno andar robandole a la gente, porque pueda ser que lo que estes haciendo ahorita te pase en el futuro. Está bien que estes usando tu tiempo en reflecionar en las cosas que has hecho. Es bueno arrepentirse, pero es malo arrepentirse de lo hecho y volverlo a hacer. Esperamos que estes bien seguro que eso es lo que realmente quieres.

My Problem

My main problem is evil temptations and the things that one does. Like me for example: My problem is stealing, but I want to change.

When I steal, I steal in my community in Oakland. I rob the streets where there are cars with nice sound systems, but I want to stop doing this because that's why I am in here, in Juvenile.

I want to stop all this because I don't benefit from what I'm doing. When I am in Juvenile, I think a lot and I reflect on what I used to do on the outs. I'm all right and little by little, I am going to change, but no matter what may happen, I'm going to represent my 'hood.

-Blaze, 150-Crew

I want to stop all this because I don't benefit from what I'm doing.

welcome to the... The Beat Without

EDDIE M. VARGAS, SR.

As far as we are concerned it is an honor to welcome back to The Beat pages the powerful wisdom of our dear friend Eddie M. Vargas Sr., who writes us from Mule Creek State Prison. Eddie never one to pull punches on any commentary he shares, definitely doesn't here, when he steps up big, in his latest, to challenge the powers that be (politicians, lawyers, judges, and all system folks) who support Prop 21. Eddie breaks it down so eloquently. We do hope you too find the following read to be beneficial, and of course we challenge any of you readers to support or question Eddie M. Vargas' latest with your own commentary.

Intro

I am sending you a writing I wrote a couple of months back while at work, which I titled, "No Consideration Or Patience." I was watching "California Connected" on PBS one day and came up with my thoughts on a subject matter they featured about juvenile offenders which really angered me and hit a nerve because of the way juveniles are labeled and treated nowadays. I hope you will publish it in one of your upcoming issues o The Beat Within magazine.

No Consideration Or Patience

What were you people thinking and feeling as you came together and came up with this idea to pass and enforce "PROPOSITION-21," which now allows you to try juveniles as adults for crimes which you feel they are adult-minded enough to be tried in court as such?

One can conclude that this was simply politically motivated due to the negligence involved in the well-thinking of this passed law that basically says if you're from ages 13 to 17 and you commit a brutal crime, you then become an adult until you're found guilty in a Kangaroo Court of Law.

If and when found guilty, these juveniles will then be sent to adult prisons where eventually they will not only become a financial burden to the state and community, but will either grow to be harden criminals, gang members, or become career criminals, or homosexuals due to their long and unwarranted incarceration at such a young age.

You're with the impression that this was going to solve all your problems by saving money, and the crime rate by juveniles dropping to a low, once word of this new passed law for juveniles got around, just as you thought the same when you got together to pass the "PROP. 8" prison prior rule.

I'm the father of a son who as a juvenile, committed a crime, and at the age of 16 years, was tried as an adult and received a 16-year prison sentence. I'm a firm believer that if you do the crime, you should be punished and do the time, but in this case, my son was never given a chance. He had no serious criminal background or violent history that warranted him being tried as an adult and receiving a 16-year prison sentence.

There were other ways he could have been dealt with and punished to justify his due punishment without having to send him to prison. The overall picture here was never truly thought of, or considered of both the good, and the bad, or long-term affect to all involved and affected.

We're quick to allow our emotions to get the best of us when we are faced with a crisis or problem, and when you have money and politics in the middle of it, you lose sight of "THE BEST INTEREST," and it shows. Until money and factors are no longer a factor in the decision making of these new passed laws, nothing will be solved or saved.

A crime is committed, a murder by three juveniles, two males and one female. The female is driving the car, while the two males pull out their guns and fire into a crowd, killing a rival-gang member.

Now sure, the female was driving while this occurred, but at fourteen years of age with no serious criminal background how do you justify trying her as an adult and sentencing her to 35 years to life in prison? It's ridiculous, and with all your wisdom, knowledge, expertise, and college educations, not one of you can justify that action taken or sentence.

Let me ask you this: How much of passing PROP. 21 was politically motivated to benefit, strengthen, and ensure your careers? Then, let me ask you this: How much was it for the best interest of all involved at being community safe? When you though of, and passed PROPOSITION 8, you thought you were enforcing five-year prison priors that would make criminals think twice about committing crimes due to lengthy prison sentences. Well, the crime rates didn't go down or stop, and criminals continued committing crimes, which is why California continues to build both adult and juvenile facilities to incarcerate them.

Rather than try to solve the problem or issue at hand in a rational way which seriously affects each community in a negative way, you come up with solutions hardened by your hearts and emotions that only make the problem more worse than it has to be or is. Crime, drugs, and gangs will always remain a part of society's everyday living and nothing will ever be passed, enforced, or changed to rid this world of those things, or minimize it so long as you people continue to believe that being tough and passing those tough laws and standing firm with a cold-hardened heart is the answer, then you're in for a big surprise because things will continue to get worse.

Dig deep in your heart, if you will, and ask yourself, "Do you really believe PROP. 21 has deterred any juveniles away from, or stopped them, from committing crimes?" Of you people referred to as "experts on gangs, drugs, crimes, prisons, CYA's," and "other adult and juvenile facilities," how many of you have actually lived that lifestyle by personal experience? Knowing someone doesn't count. I thought so, and until you've actually lived it by personal experience, you have no right to advise or conclude on it, and that's just my personal opinion on the matter. It's like, how can you tell a parent how to be a parent if you've never been a parent yourself? A degree doesn't make you an expert; it only makes you aware and educated in that area.

You fill these adult and juvenile facilities with people and tell them to rehabilitate themselves in the blind because you offer them little to no programs, or attention, to help push them in the right direction or understand not only their situation, but what it takes to be a productive person in society, and how to build a positive future for themselves. It may sound unbelievable, but there are many people in prison who really don't know how to be productive in society because they've never been educated in that way, or lived it because they got caught up in the negative lifestyle, and when they decided to hang up their gloves to live a positive lifestyle, no one is willing to give them the time of day, or benefit of the doubt. You write them off as a bad seed and don't even offer them a chance.

Wouldn't it be in the best interest to spend money to pay attention to those individuals? Specifically, those juveniles in the same situation to figure out what makes THAT individual click, for what makes one click, doesn't make another click in the same way.

Statistics are over-rated and are used too much to judge the overall picture, and that's part of the big problem.

It is said that each individual is responsible for his or her own actions. Okay, then let them be punished and judged by their own actions based on their own self-statistics, rather than by the overall statistics, which is by far misleading and unfair.

The youth of today are "OUR" future and we as parents, politicians, judges, lawyers, prosecutors, teachers, counselors, and the community, owe it to them to assist, guide, and help them to guide them in the right direction rather than remain closed-minded and closed mouthed to the situation once it arises and warrants consideration and attention. It's like when you make plans to build

continued on next page

EDDIE M. VARGAS, SR. (CONT.)

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something, you bring in all these experts to build it the best you can, in hopes it stays right. As time goes on, from wear and tear, it needs fixing, so you bring people in to fix it and understand why it needs fixing. They note it, correct it, and carry on knowing they did the best that they could to make what adjustments were needed to fix it.

You don't just condemn the building without first understanding why it's broke or with flaws. Instead, you invest to make it better. I understand society is fed up with crime and angry over the expanded criminal way, but our emotions should not be the deciding factor in passing tough laws.

Sending a juvenile, whether male or female, to prison as a juvenile is only going to strengthen the criminal growth and power, for I have yet to see, or know of one juvenile in prison become a successful person in society once they've been paroled. Why? Because those who are strong enough mentally, and physically, to survive in prison as juveniles are surrounded by, and schooled, by convicts, and, or, gang members.

Then, with all the budget cuts, what programs in prison, if any, are well enough established to assist these youngsters in rehabilitating themselves? NONE. Then, when these juvenile lifers or juveniles sentenced to long-prison terms, go before the Parole Board, they will be asked what, if anything, do you have to bring us to show us you are doing things to better yourself? Their answer will be simple: NOTHING! Then, when the board members tell them to bring them successful certificates of proof from a variety of self-help groups, and they do, it's still not enough or good enough.

For the most part, and the majority of juveniles sent to prison will spend their early years in prison fighting, lowriding, gang banging, and trying to establish themselves by challenging those who questions their being, so it's a never-ending story and battle that most times turns tragic.

With that said, all that negative behavior will eventually be used against them in the long-run when they go to the Parole Board. With that, how do you, or how can you expect these youngsters to become rehabilitated here in prison, or think you've offered them a chance to redeem themselves for their actions, when in reality, you've already written them off!

Basically you're telling them at such a young age that they're no good of use to society, and you choose not to deal with them.

For every action, there's a reaction, so what do you do when a seven or ten year old child/kid commits murder, rape, molestation, or a vicious crime? Give them a break, send them to a juvenile facility, or send them to prison with a lengthy sentence, or as a lifer? Forget the age factor, as you already have with the passing of PROP. 21, but judge them solely on the mentality of that person and crime committed by that individual alone without statistics. Forget if the individual is rich or poor, or that they're the child of a star, judge, lawyer, politician, prosecutor, etc. How do you then judge and punish that individual? When you're personally involved, you become sympathetic. When you're not, you become a hardened professional.

As long as money and politics continue to be a major factor in passing these ridiculous laws, there will never be a true and righteous solution to these continued arising problems that will continue to burden us all. I'm not an expert with a degree or certificate in any one area, but I've been around and have experienced much in my life, and I don't know the answer that can solve "OUR" problem in this area, but I do know that you can try to be more considerate and understanding when dealing with each "INDIVIDUAL" to understand why they've committed the crime. I'm not over-looking the victims here or forgetting them, but I believe if we can do more to understand and correct these problems, then we can try to lessen their chances of becoming victims.

Now, when in prison, you treat them as juveniles without the rights of adults, yet you try them as adults when you've determined they have the adult mentality to commit the crime that they were convicted of, and say they're fit for prison, which is totally contradictive of the laws you pass. As juveniles who commit, in your eyes, adult crimes, you're quick to give up on them, saying they're immature in age, but intelligent mentally, so you cross emotions with a lack of understanding to each individual, and you view and judge them as adult criminals instead of juvenile criminals, and it's wrong, and in my opinion, PROP. 21 is without merit and many others feel the same way.

It's not easy nowadays to come up with the proper solution and just punishment for each individual because most, if not all, crimes committed by juveniles is caused by a lack of proper role models/influences, and lots of peer pressure. But, we at least owe our youth of today better consideration and understanding if you are to make society a better place to function and participate in, and allow them to have a chance to be successful in life. Not every hardened criminal, be they juvenile or adult, is a lost cause, and therefore, every juvenile as an "INDIVDUAL" is worthy of our consideration, understanding, and much needed guidance, assistance, and help.

All I ask of each of you is to seriously consider all I'm saying here and bringing to your attention, and discuss it with your fellow colleagues with the hope of seeking a better solution to this true injustice. Most importantly, and again I say the victims are never forgotten or over-looked, that's without saying, but it's the issues at hand now that needs dealing with.

For the record, I say, and express, all I do as a person who has been involved in, and, with the criminal justice system since the age of seven years old. From Juvenile Hall, Group Homes, placement homes, Boys' Ranch, CYA, and prison as a criminal, ex-gang member, and now a lifer in prison, so what I speak of is from experience, but also from the heart.

My rehabilitation came at the hands of my own doing rather from the help of the system for as I grew older, I matured, but by that time, I had become a lifer in prison.

With all the youth and adult facilities being built, what's left for rehabilitation? Very little, if anything at all. I've been through it and have seen it, and I can honestly tell you that if only I had been given more attention to by the system, and proper care, then things for me may have been different. That's the honest truth.

What you believe to be the problem and issue at hand is not, and it's not known until your thinking of other solutions to curb your most recent one, gone astray. More thought, more consideration, and more care is what's needed to remain with hope for a better solution.

Instead of wasting all that money on so-called "experts" to study and put together a bunch of statistics and try to make sense of things, why not go to the real experts who have actually been there and done that, and those real experts are ex-gang members and criminals. No, I'm not talking about those who have been involved with the criminal and gang lifestyle for a few years and then went straight, I'm talking about individuals who made a life, and lived by their life as criminals and gang members, and who now walk a straight line, leaving their life in the past. Collect their valued thoughts, opinions, and ideas on the matter regarding how to best deal with, and rehabilitate juvenile and adult offenders. Most that I know of would jump at the opportunity to share and express their views on this subject matter. Fear not the ex-gang member or career criminal, fear not turning to them for ideas and solutions to the problems/issues at hand, and fear not turning to them for ideas and opinions to this problem. The futures of our youth, and of our selves are at stake here. Be open-minded.

Thank you for your time.

the beat without

JOSHUA ***The following poetry is great, great stuff from a young man who goes by the name of Josh, who writes us from a youth correctional facility in Ohio. The pieces Josh submits are so heartfelt, you can't help but feel his pain, his fears, his love and his hate. It is an honor to showcase his talents, as it is always an honor to share the writing from the young men in Ohio.***

My Life

my life has come to an end,
but if i turn around
again, it will begin
it's up to me to decide,
for me to make a selection
i just hope i get guided
in the right direction

Sometimes I Cry

Sometimes when I'm alone
I cry because I'm on my own.
The tears I cry are bitter and warm,
they flow with life, but take no form.
I cry because my heart is torn and
I find it difficult to carry on
If I had an ear to confide in,
I would cry among my treasure friends,
but whom do you know that stops that
long to help another carry on?
The world moves fast and it would rather pass
you by, than to stop and see what makes you cry
Its painful and sad, and sometimes I
cry and no one cares about why.

Natural causes will always be there, but murder must end.

A Love, Unspoken

What of a love unspoken?
Is it weaker without a name?
Does this love deserve to exist without a
title, because I dare not share its name?
Does that make me cruel and cold to deny
the world of my salvation?
Because I chose to let it grow
people tend to choke that which they do
not understand.
Why shouldn't I be weary and withhold
this love from man?
What of a love unspoken?
No one ever knows,
but this is a love that lasts, and in
secrecy it grows.

Should I Care?

Should I care about you?
Do you care about me?
Should I care about a person I've never seen?
Should I care about a mom
who left me alone?
Or a brother I've never known?
Should I care about a sister who
molested me on Christmas Day?
Should I care about a stepbrother
who died of AIDS because he was gay?
I guess I should, but I don't.
You think I should care?
But no, I don't.

It's Not All In My Mind

My outside may make you think that my
heart is made of stone.
Is it my baggy pants, my reputation and the
sharp look, I own?
I look just like every nigga standing around.
Standing on the corner, tall and thin.
If I were to show my true feelings, where
would I begin?
Abandoned by a mother and father,
my new family always lyin' to each other
not much love would come from me.
Because if you look, I'm hurting really badly.
I have stared at my ninja Nick's grave.
The flowers I picked, I saved
Now I buried my 19-year-old brother,
who took his last breath with me
because he OD'ed
My heart has screamed
nothing but pain and agony
Why did Allah take me away from my family?
One second I'm walkin' down the street, the next
I hear a gunshot and I'm kneelin'
'cause Eric's been shot.
I've missed three funerals since me being locked
down.
Two of my ninjas, and one childhood friend.
Natural causes will always be there, but murder must end.
We all know that our loved ones will come and go.
Oh Allah, please don't take anymore until I parole.

Should I care about a person I've never seen? Should I care about a mom who left me alone?

KREEPY ***KRAWLER Kreepy Krawler aka Emmanuel, has just been released after three and half months in Marin County Juvenile Hall, and is now home on the ankle monitor. He loves being home and has sent us the following two poems.***

Trust

Trust is something I lost
Through my own selfishness
Trust I could never let close
To my heart
Trust is my left eye that was always open
When I was getting transferred to ROP (Rites of Passage)
I can't even trust myself with my own fears
I feel like I am going to a full stop
On my own top

Miracles are the asking for your forgiveness
I don't want to go on—leave me alone
Forget the words
Why do I feel like saying, "Forget everything?"
Look into my eyes and tell me what you see?

Special Lady

These words are dedicated to a young lady.
Baby, I love you,
though we have only known each other for seven months.
I have never had these feelings of missing someone as much as I do you.
It feels like salt put on an open wound—it hurts.
Now that I am free, where do we go from here?
My love for you makes me look like a fool,
because I know what's up, but I won't do anything about it.
Am not no captain, so please don't play me like one.
Is it lust or love?
We will both find out when the time comes.
Smile now, but you know darn well you are going to cry later.
One love…

JE-NO ***Je-No's been on a tear of late — he's been bringing straight heat to The Beat for the last few months. There aren't many writers who have been transferred to Glen Mills in Pennyslvania who have stuck with it, but Je-No's found time, a paper, and pencil to repeatedly give us a piece of his mind. He drops two more flows below — the first a sad tale of the last eleven years, the second a chronicle of the challenges he's faced. Much respect Je-No, and keep 'em coming.***

War Stories

1993 when I seen my first murder
dude wet his shirt up
just because of a cheeseburger
'94 my house was burglared
and granny's house got burned up
everything ya hearin' was already heard of
'96 the greatest rapper was slain
and ever since he died no one was rappin' the same
The game changed in '97
When Big went to heaven
'98 I seen my folks die in front of 7-Eleven
'99 I was tossed into the grind
somethin' was lost inside my mind
I wasn't off into my rhymes
My old homie told me to get ya money and bubble slow
I was fully corrupted by the time it was 20-double-0
So I chased the dough until the rise and fall of the sun
by that time I was on the run
at 200-one
The worst day of my life happened in 2002
May seventeenth
they took another from my crew
my brother
few months later, my cousin too
2003 I caught an attempted murder case
found out in The Beat that they took my homie, Face
2004 came
charges dropped just got pinned wit' the thang
it's crazy that all this stuff can happen in an eleven year range.

Why did I have to live my life challenging my death?

Soldia

What am I here for
is what I'm thinkin' to myself
Why did I have to live my life challenging my death?
Where was I at when my brother caught five to the chest?
When did my situation get worser, as I took a breath?
Two times I done sat on a bed
patch on my head gash
on my legs had to dash
from the feds
bullets passed the back of my head
got in a car accident, passenger dead
Damn, fresh out the cell
straight to the block
Got into some beef wit' my own peeps
old friend from school start bringin' it in
that's what the ins will do
turn ya patnas into ya enemies too
Man, listen my brothers, you gotta understand
befo' you end up in the courtroom askin' for another chance
How could things get ugly and uncut
then bodies start droppin' at the sound of a gun bust
Momma said, "Listen boy, you betta get ya act right"
didn't knw pops too much — he was stuck on the crack pipe
Hov' said it
when pops died, didn't cry
didn't know 'im that well
I was on the block when he was fightin' fa bail
It's so crazy
young lady had a baby
and sold her body to the streets
she did it 'cause she probably had to eat
she had some problems wit' her peeps
Ran away
so now I pray every night fa Imay
Keep ya head up
don't let the world hold you down
my soldias roam the town
I know how it feels to be alone
soul's cold, you walk around wit' a frown
Not trustin' no human bein'
an outcast to the world
the only model for ya girl
I got a baby
so I got the kids havin' kids syndrome
but the only difference between me and the rest of 'em
I been grown.

the beat without

ARTHUR LEE HENDERSON, SR.

Mr. Arthur Lee Henderson, Sr., aka Bakri Bilal Abdad

Wu'min, an inmate at Lancaster State Prison in California, has sent y'all his original songs and an essay. He sings about his wonderful mother and how he loved her, although he couldn't confide everything he knew about the world to her; about the wisdom of caution when considering rushing into a relationship; and about how unsure he is of himself when facing his first true love. He also writes a beautiful letter to his dead homie, tells him how much he still misses him, and how young mothers and fathers are still struggling down on earth.

Modern Day Goodbyes

The hardest part about saying goodbye
To all of you
Is that you wouldn't let me do it by
E-mail e-mail e-mail

Look at you, man. All grown up. I still remember the good ole days. We'd all be playin' in the park. Noses runnin'. Holes in the knees of our pants.

Your mother used to worry more than every one of ours. Could it be that your mother was the only mother who knew where we were headed? Them days were fun, man, although they were never easy. All of our parents were strugglin'. They still bought us new toys. Heck, even the used ones were cool. Not one of us gave any thought to their sacrifices. A pile of bills, to us, meant we had run up some candy debts.

Look at you now, man. Lookin' down at us, no matter where we're at. Quite a few homies have since joined you, man. Their mothers cried as hard as yours did, the day it was time to say goodbye. There are those of us still doin' the same ole things--hangin', slangin', and bangin'. But you can see all that now, man. So can those who have joined you. It's funny how drugs, including weed and alcohol, can lead so many to believe life is but one big party. Or maybe it isn't funny, after all.

Young females, beautiful young creations, whose lives are filled with images from without, of what they're supposed to look like and who they're supposed to be. Few are even willin' to look for answers within.

Peer pressure. We all understand that monster. You already know that too, man. A few of them have also joined you. I would ask you how each of you are doing, now that you're all gone. But none of us were livin' right, so to ask that wouldn't be fair.

I've hit bottom, myself, although I'm still alive, thanks are to God. I couldn't have survived on my own. I'm hittin' the books now--learnin', growin', eyes finally open. Yeah, and I owe it all to Him. I'm still trying hard to figure out why I was spared.

For you all, it is over before you turn twenty-four. God knows I was just as wild and rebellious as each of you. Could this be why I was spared? So that I can write songs about all of you and those of us who are still alive?

Hey, man, do you think He wants to teach through me? Even the thought of that is scary. Heck, man, what do I know? Whenever I open my mouth, I sound just like my parents, our parents. What I have to say, our parents have already said over and over again. But we didn't want to hear it, so why would the next generation want to hear it?

My mother once said they will listen to me, because I would deliver the message differently than she had. Could this be it? If so, how could she have known? I've never considered writing songs when she was alive. How could our mothers understand tomorrow, while we were still struggling with today, barely acknowledging yesterday?

It wasn't that we didn't have fun. We did—the hell out of that. We lived every letter of the word "fun" each and every day. Some of us never lived long enough to realize there are other ways to enjoy life. Some of us still don't believe a better life is possible. They have their excuses. Their excuses are as valid as they are blind. Blinded by all those highs. Thinkin' life is one big party.

The next generation of parents are now strugglin', just as our parents had struggled. Matter of fact, we're the new generation of parents. Most of us fathers don't even realize we're strugglin'. That's because we ain't never known nothin' else but hard times. The new generation of mothers know they strugglin'. That's because most of them are doing the parenting on their own. A life of partying or a life of hiding our failures? What are we really doing, fellas? Yea, fellas?

The word "father" has become too abstract for many of us. It would require a book, not a song, to get into the word "daddy." Hey, man, how many of us had one of those? Better yet, how many of us are willing to become a daddy?

Struggling' is strugglin'. Trial and error is natural. Our children, our creations, will probably laugh each time we stumble, but as long as week keep trying, their mothers are bound to share a smile. We may as well struggle together to create a better tomorrow. We all deserve that much. Remember that only the strong shall survive, and none of us is weak, in spite of our failures. That's why I'm gettin' at you now, man. I just can't say goodbye like this. I know you'd return my e-mail and we'd keep it goin'. I love all of you.

Win Or Lose

I'm not gonna lie to you, baby
I want to stay with you
I'm just not sure
That's something I can do
I've never been in love before
And I've always been free
Not that I think you'd try to smother me
And I know that I love you, baby
And I never want to hurt you, baby
That's why I'm draggin' my feet
It's not that I don't love you
'Cause I know that I do
Love you, baby
I'm not gonna lie to you, baby
I want to stay with you
Baby, there's so much I want to experience with you
Pretty lady
And I know that you're right for me, lady
It's me that I'm unsure of
You see, I'm not sure I can be
All you want and need
Because I've never been in love before
This is all new to me
That's not to say I'm trying to
Back out on you, baby
I'm just trying to help you
Understand me
Because I've always been free
Baby, I know that I love you
It's me that I'm unsure of
I know there is so much that
I want to explore with you, baby
Though I'm not gonna play with you emotions, baby
Because you mean so much more to me than that, lady
And I never want you to go, pretty baby
I'm just trying to gather enough of myself
So that I can ensure your happiness
I know that I love you, love you, love you
I know that I love you

ARTHUR LEE HENDERSON, SR. (CONT.)

You've Done A Good Job

You raised me well
Before sending me out
Into this world
I want you to know
I've stood my ground
And soon I'll return
Wearing my crown

Dear dear dear Mother
You raised me well
Before sending me out
Into this world
Dear dear dear Mother
I want you to know
How much I have grown
Since I left home
Dear dear dear Mother
It wasn't always easy
No no no no
Some aren't as nice as you
Dear dear dear Mother
I've learned some things
I can't even share with you
Dear dear dear Mother
I can only promise you
There're things I'll never do
Dear dear dear Mother
A lot of what I have seen
I hope you've neer seen
Dear dear dear Mother
I could never blame you
For you have raaised me well
Dear dear dear Mother
A life in this world
Is not always easy
No no no
Dear dear dear Mother
Mother, I bet you don't know
What some people do
Dear dear dear Mother
They do things
I could never tell you about

Dear dear dear Mother
There was as time when I believed
Only school kids could act so cruel
Dear dear dear Mother
What I have now learned
Has opened my eyes
Dear dear dear Mother
To life as it is
As well as how it can be
Dear dear dear Mother
Most don't even understand
What God has in store
For each of us
Dear dear dear Mother
If only I knew how
To convey His message clearly
Dear dear dear Mother
The world would improve
And more would be saved
Dear dear dear Mother
How can I convey
What I have learned
Dear dear dear Mother
Since I left home?
Dear dear dear Mother
The strength my daddy gave me
Helped me to endure
What life has thrown at me
Dear dear dear Mother
It is God who has given me
Wisdom and knowledge
And none can compare
Dear dear dear Mother
What God has taught me
Has improved my Iman
Which means faith
In the One above
Dear dear dear Mother
For no one guides better
And God is always there
Dear dear dear Mother
My Deen's growing strong
That means religion

Dear dear dear Mother
Through my belief in God
I can excel
Dear dear dear Mother
For no one grants gifts like Him
Dear dear dear Mother
Soon I'll return
Wearing my crown
Dear dear dear Mother
And dear dear dear Father
I'll always love you
Dear dear dear Mother
God will always come first
Dear dear dear Mother
As salaam alazikum

The Heart Is Home

The heart is home
All home is where the heart is
You must be the happiest woman
In the world
For no one is as
Comfortable in their own skin
As you

All home is where the heart is, heart is
You must be the happiest woman
In the world
Yea, yea, yea, yea
No one is as comfortable
In their own skin as you
Naw, naw, naw, naw
Real beauty is always unique
Yea, yea, yea, yea
No one can recreate
What God has given you
Naw, naw, naw, naw
So save your money
Each one of you
Yea, yea, yea, yea

What God gives can't be bought
Naw, naw, naw, naw
There's someone for each one of you
Yea, yea, yea, yea
Rushing into a relationship
Isn't the thing to do
Naw, naw, naw, naw
The rushers usually meet the trouble
Yea, yea, yea, yea
No one chooses the same qualities twice
Naw, naw, naw, naw
Some are still being refined
Yea, yea, yea, yea
Which world will you be a part of?
Oow, oow oow oow
When real happiness finds you?
Oow, oow, oow oow
This one or the next one?
Oow, oow, oow oow
God grants happiness in both worlds
Yea, yea, yea, yea
He doesn't grant it to the faithless
Naw, naw, naw, naw
He only grants it to the faithful
Yea, yea, yea, yea
So, ask yourself
Oow, oow, oow, oow

Which one are you?

Which world will you be a part of?

the beat without

TAALIB SANKOFA

Taalib Sankofa, ever the philosopher, teacher and activist, sends us the four following pieces of writing from the California Medical Facility State Prison in Vacaville, CA. In his prose pieces, he talks about what is lacking and what is needed in the world today, particularly in the black community, while he reserves his thoughts on love and loneliness for his poetry. Here's to unity.

Umoja (UNITY)

Unity as a people, a culture and as a family. Unity as a nation within a nation. Unity is working together in harmony. When men, women and young people bond together on the shared principles of rightness (Ma'at) and justice, there is peace. Unity is not based on skin color, but on shared principles that people of African descent share in common, the common denominator of culture.

Unity is all about love, the love of people and healthy respect for our traditions and culture. We should celebrate the accomplishments of the descendants of queens and chiefs, scientists and our warriors of the motherland. The true meaning of the "umoja" is a verb, as in service to the community, the action of networking effectively or being a help to the people.

Today in the motherland, the diaspora, in this western hemisphere, we do not have unity. This is the reason that the study of the Nguzo Saba is so valuable to us in this modern day equivalent of Babylon. The Nguzo Saba are cultural principles that emphasize the best qualities of our race. In order for principles to be beneficial, they have to be put into practice.

Umoja is not to be confused with the so-called game. In tradition societies, "rites of passage" were provided for boys — these rites of passage were positive. Today, the youth have rites of passage that are essentially negative. Now, the reality is that today, in the early part of the 21st century, apathy is predominant in the thinking of many our youth. Let us give thought to the young men in our cities. The brothers, the ruff necks, the would-be "thugs," are not born criminals. The ones involved in crime have fallen for the illusion of the so-called game. The game is a mentality of having it all right now, all the money and all the pleasure, and of course, all the consequences that come along with it. The game has few winners, many losers and lasts only for a season.

Participants in the game are like cards in deck of cosmic poker. As it is in all casinos, the deck is stacked against the player. In this case, the casino is the corporate capitalist system. The reward those who play according to the rules of wins and losses that are counted daily at the alter of mammon, Dow Jones. The house (system) has the winning hand. The game has many levels and the player on the street involved in illicit activity who thinks he is winning may actually be playing into the hands of the real poker sharks (criminal justice system) who will pull his card in due time.

We have to ask ourselves in this time of war and hardship, is not the metaphor of Herod's edict to slay the Christ applicable to the condition of young men today? The decree from a wicked Roman ruler was to kill all the male children at the time of the birth of Christ to prevent the rise of a messiah. The statistics show that black youth are dying at an astronomical rate, mostly from preventable causes. We are filling up the prisons and hospital wards at rates that are disproportionate to our numbers. It would seem almost that the young were almost some sort of decree to prevent the rise of the Christ.

Is not the rise of the Christ a simile for the potential in man to grow to his highest spiritual consciousness, putting the needs of other first, the desire to ease the suffering of a people under the yoke of oppression? The original man has to return to his nature as builder and representative of the omnipotent power that sustains all solar systems. The African male, 18-33, is the Christ, metaphorically speaking, who has not been revealed.

No discussion of unity is complete without a discussion of umoja, and none is valid without the value of black women. From the Queen of Sheba to Mae Jameson, we witness the dignity and brilliance of the woman of African descent. Keeping on the level, the women have suffered and been exploited continuously as a sex objects. Our women are to be respected and are the foundation of civilization. We are not to refer to women of African descent as bitches and hoes. If all our women are bitches and hoes, then we, the men, are nothing but dogs who beg for scraps from the massas' table, or worse, pimps who are dependent on women. A pimp it has been said "is a pimple on society's ass," ie., a parasite. Our women are to be respected as helpmeets in the plan of a loving and merciful creator.

Yes, the women of African descent are excelling in all areas of today's society in spite of historical discrimination. Mae Jameson is a beautiful example of intelligence and strength in her role as space traveler and scientist. This writer would like to commend and salute her for being a model of all things excellent.

We have to change our perceptions of women as "commodities" to be purchases, bartered and sold. The pimp mentality views women as less than. This thinking is self-defeating. Women are reflections of the man. The role for successful unions is for women and men to worship together and strive to build harmonious and prosperous family lives. Rights of women should be given first priority — the right to education, drive cars, meaningful employment and to be protected from exploitation.

Piquant

Deep in the valley of loneliness
the thought of disappointment reigns
moment by moment
no reward equals no incentive
lack of communication causes circuits to swell
hard knocks for rude boys working off karmic debts
never say waiting on letter from a female friend
twenty-four seven, dry your eyes
no sympathy
what is diagnosis for no reciprocity
old tapes rewinding over and under
the down low
lovely women really do care but choose not to write out
of spite
bad thought, gratitude more than attitude to be
displayed
at appropriate moments
when convenient
smile
high expectations all set-ups for the upset
so smart to be so naïve
she really does care
but does not want to interfere
ironic
storm clouds disappearing
quietly
across the valley

**Deep in the valley of loneliness
the thought
of disappointment reigns**

TAALIB SANKOFA (CONT.)

What's News

What's news? 9/16/2003? Ms. Price, sister of Venus and Serena Williams was murdered 9/14 or 9/15/03. Ms. Price was their older sister and the incident took place in Compton, CA. We pray that the murderers of Ms. Price will be captured and dealt with according to Islamic law. Fratricide or African on African violence is at epidemic proportions. We do not know the nationality of the perpetrators, and we pray that whoever committed this act of genocide be brought to justice.

The Conscious Revolution in Progress and the United Black Nation movements are not doing enough to police their own communities and prevent acts of random violence. We desire spirituality, education and a living wage for the female and male souljahs of the ghetto. Brother Lawrence Adams lost his life in tragic accident on 9/30/03 in Soledad Central. Mr. Adam was known as the hip-hop artist 3-2-1 from ICG in Long Beach. Brother Adams was a leader and master student who spoke of using conscious lyrics in music to share his pain and joys with others.

We of the community salute brother 3-2-1, Mr. Lawrence Adams. "Life is but a gift. Memories both cherish and haunt. Pain is a reminder and Imani in a brighter path sustains the path shining within. Love and Salaams Worldwide."

The seven principles are building blocks for young street poets and hip-hop artists to build upon. It not you in the Temple, it is the Temple within you. Brother 3-2-1 was only 22 years old at the time of his passing. We ask all Dog Pound Gangstas to stand up for conscious producers like Harry-0 and Common.

How many of our sistas and young brothas have to die in tragic accidents before real black progress and real brown pride have a meeting of souls and collective minds? We all need to look out for brother Goo-Goo in the hall, and strive to live clean and free! Stay Tawqa

We salute representatives in the community who are working to stop the violence and increase the peace! Omega Boys Club in SF, Bo Taylor of Unity One and Minister Tony Muhammad of the NOI Temple 27 in Los Angeles. We in the African, Asian and brown community should strive to build networks with each other, and not the police, to prevent tribalism and random acts of violence from destroying a generation of youth who have yet to see the age of 33.

like jazz at Yoshi's
at 10 o'clock
as the moonlight
serenades the bay

How many of our sistas and young brothas have to die in tragic accidents before real black progress and real brown pride have a meeting of souls and collective minds?

Vivid Imagination

Daydreaming on a sunshiny Saturday afternoon
Vibing to the sounds of the four elements . . . reminisce
Schoolgirl charm, never wanted, never wanted to tell you
that I had a crush on you.
Our relatives would never truly understand
Creole soul, your smile is priceless and you look so damn fine
Behind those glasses!
Compassion is the gift of a true souljah
We are apart
Who am I but a small playa
Who has been pimped by the game?
My infatuation for you has no shame, empathetic and perceptive you are, college smart and spiritual by grace Do we truly know each other or are we even willing to risk it?
Abdullah Taalib cleaning up his image and no longer astray
Hard to comprehend this spell of charm you cast on I and I the first time
Sankofa glanced at your eyes . . .
Never believed in astrology the way one believes in the potential of pure love that is beyond a spoken word no matter what you have heard
What is so true is the respect and admiration one has for a woman who is no longer a girl.
Or is it just a rude boy crush on the magnet of your natural attraction the Most High has bestowed on you with abundance
Jasmine mystery lady, can I share my secret with you?
Mellow Taalib only a square for your charm,
only asking you for what is taboo, as in taking all or nothing, passes on the dice table of a real relationship with a pure intention,
trust and devotion,
not to mention stepping out of your comfort zone
You know, like jazz at Yoshi's at 10 o'clock
as the moonlight serenades the bay
Muslim now with nothing left to hide except this affection for you
Sun, moon and star
you are the quintessence of all things radiant
So sure true love is bliss
or is this just another daydream?

the beat without

GLENN CORNWELL

Glenn Cornwell has done it again, impressed the heck out of us with his powerful, insightful, brutally honest writing. Glenn breaks down the Abu Ghraib scandal in a way only a bright former soldier and current prisoner on death row could. We held onto this article for a minute, but its observations are still brilliant and correct. Glenn is still sitting on San Quentin's death row fighting for his life and supporting his family to the best of his ability. We wish him justice and peace, and thank him for his continuing desire to reach out and teach from a place intended to kill the human spirit. We commend you, Glenn.

Abu Ghraib

If you look at the photos of abuse and cruelty recently released from Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq, you must conclude that the misconduct wasn't just some isolated incident and must have been authorized by at least the intelligence gathering machine of that prison and its leadership from the top down, and on to points unknown.

The thing that jumps out at me is the photos of US military people smiling, giving "thumbs up" while laughing at their own sadistic behavior in action. You didn't see guards and interrogators hiding and ducking away from the cameras as the photos were taken, you saw females pointing at naked, hooded men's genitals, enjoying their captives' humiliation and acting as if they were immune even in their own minds to any wrongdoing. Someone in the food chain had obviously convinced them what they were doing was acceptable behavior. How else could a female soldier in a Muslim civilization rest her outspread upper torso on a pile of naked, hooded Muslim men configured in a way to make them appear to have been having wild sex as she smiles for the camera and relishes in their shame.

Even the sheer volume of photos coming out of the prisons in Iraq prove that what we're witnessing isn't some isolated event caught on some hidden mini-camera. What I saw was little GI Janet on the swings at kindergarten recess shouting, "Look mom, no hands," laughing at the excitement of the moment.

In truth, no double talk, smoke or mirrors will ever do these incidents justice for those of us who know, because they point to a deeper systemic problem alive and well in the minds of those who are charged with locking people away for whatever reason. Even now we get glances of deeper psychosis when the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, apologized for the actions "caught on tape," then complained about the "illegal filming" as if it was the major culprit, more than the actions themselves. For those in authority, "the camera" is the strange piece of puzzle that's out of place, not the event.

All we have to do is transfer our attention across the pond to the good ol' USA and we'll see how close the apple has fallen from the tree. We don't need to talk about the abuse that's rampant amongst female prisoners in America's criminal justice system, let's talk about something we all seem to know about but somehow don't see the correlation. I'm talking about some of the fifteen men who were let off of Illinois's death row before the governor in that state, Honorable Governor Ryan, decided to let everyone off Illinois' death row.

It wasn't the fact that those fifteen men were exonerated of wrongdoing after clearcut evidence proved the state was holding the wrong men, it was a closer look at some of the statements several of the freed men made after their releases: false confessions gained by torture, beating the men with phone books, placing plastic bags on their heads until they passed out, then repeating the process until the confessions were had, or connecting electric wires to the suspects' genitalia and shocking them into confessing to crimes they didn't commit. Right here in the "Land of the free and home of the brave." Not one hundred years ago, not even pre-civil rights, I'm talking about recent history, and that's just what we know, the unknown is probably ten times that dark.

Today when you see a photo of a female soldier holding a leash with a naked Iraqi prisoner sprawled out on the hallway floor of Abu Ghraib, believe me, no lower level soldier could have been that open and that creative without the support of supervisorial staff. The fact that you don't see guns pointed at the men means the damage had already been done and the men had fully resolved themselves to their fates. What happened after that is an idea that's as old as history itself as the oppressor acts out the unthinkable on the oppressed.

Somehow those Iraqi prisoners who found themselves caught up in the US version of Saddam's old antics weren't really considered as human beings, which falls back on my premise that when President Bush calls those who happen to be Muslim, "Evildoers," he speaks directly to the notion that Muslims in general are misguided. In other words, President Bush teaches us that certain people are evil because of their culture, worship and traditions. That's evil in the form of a noun, "Person, place, or thing," not evil as an adjective which describes the action of a person, place or thing. So in Bush's mind, little Ameen isn't evil because he drove a car filled with explosives into a group of US troops, he was born evil and the world would have been a better place if someone would have simply placed him in a plastic bag and tossed him in the Tigris River. For the average soldier who happens to be unfortunate enough to be serving in Iraq, once they've been groomed to believe an entire belief system is evil, and then couple that "embedded notion" with the idea of Americans being ambushed, burned, mutilated, then dragged down the street and hung from a bridge, it's easy to see how minds that were once civil began to look at captives as less than human. The sad part of it all is that many Americans will somehow reason away even this, which points to who many of us have grown to become.

Another reason why I'm so sure the actions we see on film were condoned from the top down is because of my own experience while serving in the US Navy. My information is really old, but as I recall, in 1973, when I went in, one of the main points I got out of it all became apparent when all us recruits were standing in a long line of about six deep waiting to get our hair cut. We'd been given our issue of uniforms, but we all still had all these different looks from the neck up. Most of us brothers had big naturals, while many of the white guys had various cuts of long hair, down their backs, above the collars, etc. About hundred yards away, you could see the guys coming out, and believe it or not, they all looked the same.

Well, within the twelve weeks of basic training, all those individuals became one unit. We didn't even walk when we were alone, we ran. When we were together we marched, and by the time they finished with us, we were a machine in almost every sense of the word. So the idea that these military people took it upon themselves to openly act out is a contradiction to everything I know about the military. In fact, I challenge any reader to ask anyone who has served in the military if they would have openly treated prisoners like what occurred at Abu Ghraib without supervisor approval? In my mind these "softening up actions" had to be taught and approved, the result of an orientated action. The fact that it's in violation of the 4th article of the Geneva Convention and contrary to any pattern of behavior a lower level National

continued on next page

GLENN CORNWELL (CONT.)

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Guardsmen would "have the stones" to act out speaks to something else.

One thing for sure, the reasons for going to war in Iraq didn't exist, and now that the West has invested so much into this mess falls under the heading of "you broke it, you bought it." Everything else is just a side effect of bad planning and an arrogance that didn't think history needed any consideration. We know the puppet dictator Saddam Hussein had been involved with the Central Intelligence Agency since he was twenty-one years old, back with the John F. Kennedy Administration. We also know the Ambassador of Iraq in 1990, Ms. Gladsby, testified before Congress that she told Saddam Hussein, "Our relationship is with you, not Kuwait," which led him to believe he had the green light to invade the oil-rich nation just as he'd invaded Iran on almost the exact same day the Embassy hostages were boarding the plane for their flight home after being held captive for 351 days. In retrospect, we can only conclude that Saddam Hussein somehow felt that because of his service to Western influence, coupled with the vast amount of oil reserves and the abundance of weapons systems and technology given to him by people introduced to him from the West, he must have elt that the special relationship he enjoyed could somehow match the unique relationship America has with Israel. In my mind that miscalculation was his downfall.

The short version of his importance to this discussion is that Saddam made the mistake of writing this book entitled Three Things Allah Should Not Have Created: Flies, Persians, and Jews. In this book he talked about how he would destroy Israel in such a way that it would be remembered for five hundred years. This effectively sealed his fate.

Keep in mind that Saddam Hussein had been given the technology to create nuclear weapons and was scheduled to come to the US for a detonation conference, which, of course, never occurred after the first US invasion, "Operation Desert Storm." Up until recently, many Iraqis still had photos of Saddam Hussein and Donald Rumsfeld hanging in their offices and living rooms in Iraq. After the first invasion, the thirteen years of sanctions against Iraq greatly closed many old tribal rank by necessity, making the Masjids and mosques the nucleus of Iraqi life. Meanwhile, no American posed the question and confronted the idea that Saddam Hussein was receiving roughly 10% of most of the black market income flowing into Iraq during the sanctions and oil for food program. The brain-damaged puppet built mansions all over Iraq, feigning power, while his military had been destroyed in 1991. Only his people suffered from the sanctions.

Fast forward to today and we see that not only was Saddam Hussein not a threat to any of his neighbors and really an annoyance to Israel, he didn't have any of the technology America and Britain feared. However, he still had an abundance of oil and strategic position in the Middle East no one seems to ever consider out loud. Even the idea that we have oilmen in the White House isn't part of the discussion among mainstream American news. The fact that the abuses at Abu Ghraib had been reported back in January by the Red Cross and no one batted an eye about the abuse until the photos came up, points to a system that's more concerned with the "appearance of correctness," than actually being correct. Once we tie all the in's and out's of what's occurring together, we're still left with the same conclusion.

Personally, I might feel better if we had Muslims or people of color involved in the mistreatment, that way I couldn't make the undisputed claim that what was being practiced in ABbu Gharaib stemmed from a Bible-belt mentality with white Christian crusaders torturing Muslims of color, because they felt them less than human. It's certainly what the Muslim world sees when they look at the photos. All we have to do now is think about the idea that many more pornographic photos and even a video are yet to come, and the plot thickens. It's easy to conclude that "Muslim nations are doing the same things," but America allegedly invaded Iraq to bring a way of life to the region that is supposed to guarantee individual rights and be a beacon for the Middle East. Of course in order for us to believe that, we have to dismiss everything we know about Iraq's history with the West since 1914, and America's need for fossil fuel. We can ignore the oilmen who run the country or even America's unique relationship with Israel. We can ignore the lack of weapons of mass destruction found in Iraq, or the lies told by everyone who works for the White House in the Bush administration, or even the fact that everything we were told about what would happen when the war started, the idea that we'd be "greeted with roses and kisses."

We can forget about the Iraqi National Congress who said and did everything it could to get us to invade Iraq, or the fact that these same people (Ahmad Chalabi and company) are receiving millions of dollars a year in US support. What we can't ignore is the fact that the best and most beautiful kids in the world are being murdered, shot, burned and dragged down the streets of Fallujah to be hanged from a bridge. We can't dismiss the thousands of Americans who've been maimed and disabled for life when America didn't really have to trick Saddam Hussein into "the wrong" in the first place. What we see unfolding in Iraq is a few very powerful people injecting good Americans with training and an approach to war that simply guarantees more war, more hatred and more bloodshed. What happened at Abu Ghraib was simply one link down a dark road traveling toward the abyss. What most Americans may not understand is that those kinds of actions happen all the time right here in American county jails and prisons across the country. The main difference is "the people who control the cameras and recording devices don't allow them to reach the media." Had that not happened in Iraq, the world would still be blind to the truth, and officials in the highest offices in the US government would be denying that any systemic abuse exists.

Recently it was released that the new ambassador to Iraq will be a man named John Negroponte. He'll be in charge of the largest US embassy in the world with about 3,000 embassy employees, and at least 130,000 American troops. What's interesting is that the announcement was made after the Central American nation of Honduras pulled their 1400 troops out of Iraq. What ties Mr. Negroponte to all this is that during the 1980s he was ambassador to Honduras and gained funding for the infamous Honduran Death Squad called "Task Force 319." Almost 200 people are still missing as a result of this deadly unit's actions surrounding the Contra insurgencies into Nicaragua. Obviously Iran/Contra was a testing ground for Iraq. If nothing else, as this ugly time in American history plays out for the world, we must assume that because of ambassador Negroponte's experiences, he'll do something about all those cameras.

Note: it was just released on May 11, 2004, that terrorists have just beheaded an American named Nick Bird; it seems the hatred has a life of its own.

hatred has a life of its own

the beat without

SUNMANSLIGHT ***A near lifetime of imprisonment has made SunMansLight a true expert in the day-to-day reality of the American prison empire. Here, he wonders why our country and our people can so quickly respond to the depravities and torture the press has uncovered by our soldiers against Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib while virtually ignoring those same abuses here at home. He makes the point that a number of those accused are prison guards in their civilian lives. (He wrote this before two more American prison guard soldiers were accused of kicking a shackled 52-year-old Iraqi father of eleven in the chest so hard that 24 hours later he was dead...) The walls that keep him imprisoned at Salinas Valley State Prison apparently also serve to keep us "good" people out, so that we react in horror to events halfway around the world, while pretending they don't exist on the daily right here at home. What he says about our lack of concern for our own prisoners tells us more about ourselves than we care to know.***

Two Prison Scandals

Do we care more about the prison abuses at Abu Ghraib than we do here at home? Consider, for decades we have known of the abuse throughout American prisons and have accomplished little to stop it. It took but a couple of weeks to end it in Iraq.

It took an "international incident" to get the proverbial governments hand out of the cookie jar. What will it take here?

Will we learn from it and apply that knowledge as we struggle to understand it is in the interest of everyone to reform the U.S. prison system?

Though some would argue America's prisons are not run the way cellblocks 1-A and 1-B in Abu Ghraib were last fall, it is telling that two of the primary players in the abuse of Iraqi POWs were, professionally, prison guards in the United States.

Our prisons are in fact densely riddled with acts of torture, sexual violence, drugs and mental illness – creating a brutal existence for those who are incarcerated. Fixing them is not something we owe to the international community but to ourselves.

What happened at Abu Ghraib seems to have established that we are horrified at the idea of forcible sodomy inside Iraqi prisons. Should not that sense of outrage apply in America to our own? Or, as I fear, are we so cowed by our government we will forever refuse to 'hear' the thousands of stories, many accompanied with photographs and video tapes, proving abuse and murder of our troubled men and women?

An estimated ten percent, likely more, of prison inmates are victims of rape at least one time. Seven out of ten of those victims are raped repeatedly throughout their stay in prison. Seventeen percent of those victims attempt suicide; eight percent are successful.

Suicidal despair is common in prison since they are used to warehouse the mentally ill. It is estimated there are more mentally ill men and women in America's jails and prisons – somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000 – than in all its psychiatric hospitals, who do not get proper treatment, and are often punished by being placed indefinitely into solitary confinement cells as a consequence of their illness. Its only effect is to exacerbate their psychogenic psychosis.

Instead of de-institutionalizing the mentally ill, when tens of thousands were ordered released from hospitals in which they were seriously abused by psychiatric staff, we have effectively transferred them from one institution to another by leaving our long-failed "justice" system no option but to incarcerate them inside prisons.

Adding to these problems are abusive guards, drugs, gangs, and much more in a society from which there is no escape.

Will we ever view the things that go on in our prisons as we have in Abu Ghraib? We should. The only difference is American prisoners have been suffering the same abuse for over one hundred years instead of two.

Will we ever stop talking, and do something about it as we did in Abu Ghraib, or will that not happen until there is an international incident?

What happened to the once-held belief that incarceration is the punishment, and should not be augmented by random brutality and poor treatment? There must be a change in our attitude. Prisons can do much good for our society or continue on as they have been – further destroying those who enter.

To understand that those who go to prison, despite their weaknesses, or how wicked or ill, are human beings and should be so treated. We must ask ourselves, "Who is so innocent of wrong doing in their life they need not be grateful that 'But for the grace of God it could be me?'"

Why cannot we send a message to those who we entrust our psychologically and emotionally troubled too, that abuse in any form by guards will not be tolerated, and that it will be punished no matter how powerful the prison guards union?

If we are going to jail more Americans than any other country in the world, their treatment needs to be re-examined. Considering that 98% of all convicted felons will some day be released back into society, we all have a vested interest in the condition of these men and women as they move back into our neighborhoods next to us.

Eli Lehrer, a so-called criminal justice "expert," has agreed that "while prisoners are in custody and under control, that is the time to do some good for them by instituting programs..." I agree! Is it not in our best interest, however distastefully we view their criminal acts, that we do our best to assure that mandatory rehabilitation programs return to us men and women habitual in productivity in place of criminal acts?

There is nothing that will reduce the now out-of-control recidivism rate other than rehabilitation programs while incarcerated, in place of physical abuse and years of solitary confinement. We cannot hope they will "get over it" after they are released.

I assume most anyone with a conscience understand why Abu Ghraib has raised such an outcry. The abuse there ha had far-reaching consequences, not the least being American soldiers and civilians killed as "get-back."

Most of the violence in prison is a direct result of the abuse suffered. Only a fool would believe prisoners live their days plotting how to assault their guards, as recently portrayed in a half-hour prison documentary on television produced by prison guards and their union as they attempt to keep their sweetheart deal of a contract given them by ex-governor Gray Davis.

If none other, there are three facts I am certain we have all learned throughout our lives and can mutually agree upon: respect begets respect; violence begets violence; what is sown shall be reaped. That is the true nature of the beast.

In my mind, there is something wrong with a country that appears more concerned with the care and treatment of foreign prisoners than it does its own. Even after 45 years of incarceration, I continue to believe America is better than that.

...respect begets respect; violence begets violence; what is sown shall be reaped. That is the true nature of the beast.

ESMOND SANFORD

The poet Esmond Sanford comes back for a second go around in the pages of The Beat Without (and we've got a letter that we're guessing has round three sitting as yet unopened on the desk already). Upon receiving his first copy of The Beat, Esmond wrote lines that we're sure many of you felt upon seeing your first piece printed: "I just received my first copy of The Beat Within and man, I love it! I seen my piece, dawg. Man, I seen my piece!" Here are some more for you, Esmond, and the rest of The Beat readers to see. Esmond Sanford writes from Madison County Jail in Edwardsville, Illinois.

When confusion hits your soul, do you always got to know why?

Philosophical Thinking

I think all the time. I sometimes wonder, are my thoughts worth hearing? I think that love is truth and truth is real. To be totally truthful, one must be first totally truthful with him or herself.

You must fully recognize full truth of self. First, truth comes from honesty; honesty breeds freedom; freedom is the breath of life.

Life is all in all. The reason why I say this, from life comes all forms of thought and knowledge. We, as great minds, must be able to bring forth our most sacred and best reasoning and thinking.

Even though my physical is bound, my mental and spiritual is totally free. Why, when philosophers philosophize, they only talk about the highest good? I tell you today that the highest form of bad or evil is where we receive our true knowledge of light, goodness, and truth. Is it not from pain we learn that relief is good? Is it not from hurt that we learn that to heal is good? Is it not from hate we learn how to love? Is not from sadness we learn happiness? So I say today, philosophically, that truth is pure meaning and pure meaning takes on many facets of forms.

To recognize the truth of self is to be free from wrongness. It's the lack of knowledge of self is why we commit wrongs.

When a person loves themselves, they can fully love the world.

To Be Me

It's so hard to be me
but I'm just trying to stay free
but it seems like the adversary is trying to kill me —
this is what it's like to be me.

Some days I'm unbearable
some nights I'm something terrible
but my psycho-condition is not confirmable —
this is what it's like to be me.

Some days I'm sad
but most days I'm mad
sitting in this cell
I dream of being a nomad —
this is what it's like to be.

My girl is my love
but she always things she's not number one
but hey
there's nothing new under the sun!

Would you like to be?

The Beat Within Me

As I read these sacred words from The Beat Within, I connect in soul to everyone who's locked down in county, state, or federal pen

I see and hear their pain through their words and sacred lyrics, and can't help but to remember my mistakes and promises now as I reminisce

Hoping the readers of this bible can feel this, the way I see this

I'm forced to release this creed and oath-bound choice to these soldiers of the good fight

Thugged-out people becoming (from their beat within) soldiers for the light

Oh! how Jah has blessed us to become free, I will call the fighter's call and always serve loyal the beat within me . . .

Meaning Of Life?

Are you not born just to one day die? When you are born into the world, why do you cry?
When confusion hits your soul, do you always got to know why?
Is not life a blessing? Was not life meant to be fulfilling instead of a curse?
Well answer me this: Why do we all cry when life starts to hurt?
I believe we cry at birth because we know we are cursed and the truth of life sends you straight to the hearse
To me there is no true meaning to life's worth unless you grow to love, and always love God first.

I think all the time. I sometimes wonder, are my thoughts worth hearing? I think that love is truth and truth is real.

the beat without

DESHAUN LAVENDER

From the brief letter to The Beat, through two profoundly thought-provoking poems, DeShaun Lavender distinguishes himself as a major writer and poet. What he describes as "creative thoughts scribbled" become, in his skillful hands, testament to the power of the mind — and the unbelievable resources of thought that we imprison and ignore, at our own peril. We welcome this more-than-talented writer back to the pages of The Beat. DeShaun writes us from High Desert Prison in Susanville.

Is There A Balance?

Erupted violence disperses opposing
Forces confusing natural orders of my vibe,
Power struggles unstabilizing my inside
Dr. Jeckyll in the sun when the moon rises converts to Mr. Hyde

Divinely conceived, one of my God's seeds
Pre-historic ancestral line relating me to Adam and Eve,
Contemplating eating apples from a knowledgeable tree
Garden of Eden, where their minds were first deceived.

This tuggle of spiritual warfare
Innately resides in me,
Forces of satan seduced my foreparents
A decision which God truly disagreed.

Now I suffer a painful wrath
Created by set's path,
My eyes are permanently red
Held witness to too many blood baths.

No one seems to overstand
A heart beat of the tormented soul,
Hearts that are frozen cold begs
Of warm hands of God to touch our spirits and remold.

Experience brings forth clarity
In vision,
Healing powers of higher spirits regenerates itself
Within us in form of right decisions.

Can this be strength
Eve and Adam were missing?
It's a shame they only utilized
One of their three dimensions.

Their mistake equates a lesson
Which has captured my attention,
their errors in judgment is historic proof
Not listening to divine premonitions.

The sin is scribbled in
Blood the world over,
Global trouble tension smothers a brotha,
Expecting to lean on another's shoulder.

Different corners of earth
Everyone's strapped with infrared beams,
Camouflaged in green organized
In units of militant teams.

Is there a balance to
Unite opposing forces,
Prophecies of the wise have spoken
Unity builds itself in agreement of positive choices.

We're blessed with a higher nature
Even though our souls are debased,
If you run you'll be chased
Stand! Defend your honor and weakness will be replaced

Greetings Beat Within

I take the opportunity in this moment to express appreciation and gratitude for remaining consistent in bringing the fruits of the spoken word to the page. I haven't reached out as of late. However, upon delivery of the most recent "Beat," a few creative thoughts scribbled in ink inspired me to print a couple of thoughts of my own.

The research laboratory, "My Cage," has been put to full use in productivity, meaning I've engaged my mind in profound studies which has left minimum time for writing.

So, thank you once again for your undying support with the best of wishes to you and yours.

**Educational system wasn't equipped to manage
A trouble mind so their teachings I ignored.**

Fulfilling A Prophecy

An inspirational vernacular creating messages
A linguistic voice for the youth,
Not misleading deep in mythology, mainly,
Describing our unfortunate situation identifying the truth.

Surviving extremities of living in turbulent
Transition stages unstable from the core,
Educational system wasn't equipped to manage
A trouble mind so their teachings I ignored.

Distorted love saturated in pain
A connection I formed with the streets,
Childhood friends were homeless selling drugs and
Stealing currency, the only means to guarantee we eat.

Life on the run concealing weapons
Contrary to a smile, isn't all fun,
Survival of a jungle you're either preyed upon
Or you're the predator with a gun.

Young princes, young princesses engulfed
In fascination of the evils men do,
Against all odds a familiar feeling
Remember I once traveled in your shoes.

Listen, before you slip to fall
Which may cost you all,
Association with the ones movin' forward and
Patiently wait for your opportunity to call.

Inmate talents can assist development
Once recognized as a gift,
Your purpose in life will unravel once
Elevation of your consciousness begins to lift.

Life's similar to a Monopoly game
Buying, selling and trading,
With our own resources, production and manufacturing
Items on a global level inventing labels Africans made.

IW ***We welcome yet another young man from a Youth Correctional Facility in Ohio who drops a number of poems on us. We do not know too much about IW but we are glad he knows of us. By the way, there is plenty more form Ohio on the on-deck circle, brace yourself readers for the Ohio connection!***

Hate

I hate this place, the establishment too
If you were here, so would you
I hate seeing the languid bodies moving down the hall
They make me want to vomit and fall
I hate the way they give extra time
It's like double jeopardy for my own crime
I leave this place in a little while
When I walkout those doors
Oh, what a smile!

No Warning

As we are released into this world
We are so violently hurled
At times, things are unexpected
And we are not fully corrected
We go out and make mistakes
Why? Because there are no time-out breaks
It ain't cool when we come back
I wish I were told about this place
Before I gave it a crack.

When I walkout those doors Oh, what a smile!

Bed-time

It's 9:00 and the lights are dim
The radio plays and the wood is grim
It's difficult to sleep
When you know things creep
Staff is entranced by the TV.
They aren't concerned with me
I pray to our sweet Lord
Hoping against hope that He doesn't pull my cord
I know I'll leave one day
Once this debt to society is paid.

A Lie

We run and play games outside
If you're wanted for a beating
There really is no place to hide
Deals can be made at a mob-like meeting
They don't often last long, though
People here go back on their word
All they want is to put on a show
They're always mad at what they think they heard
You can tell staff everyday
All they care about is their pay
The whole place is one big lie.

Wasting Time

We're here simply wasting time
Why? Because we committed a crime
We watch TV and play video games
It's all a mask to hide the shame
We go to school and we eat our meals
All the while guys making deals
At times it feels like it's only me
Then I think of the day I go free

Loneliness slides across my heart Like a tear falling from a long forgotten eye

RUDY DOMINGUES ***What incredible beauty lies in the hearts of so many men and women locked away in the huge prison empire that is the California Department of Corrections. In just a few brief lines, Rudy Domingues demonstrates, from his cell in Wasco State Prison, just how much we, the taxpaying public, cheat ourselves out of this beauty by building walls — and turning our backs. Thank you for this, Rudy.***

Smile For Me

Loneliness slides across my heart
Like a tear falling from a long forgotten eye;
From a long forgotten dream,
From a love long from my reach…
Cries of ecstasy once echoed loudly
Against the corridors of my mind
Gone, as the embers of desire form my Heart –
A leaf falls from the calendar
Signaling the passing of another day…
Life goes on

YOUNG D

Motivated by one of our recent weekly topics, Young D steps up from the friendly confines of Beat HQ to give y'all a slice of his life. (Just a tip — it's way more pleasant to write your pieces from The Beat office, even if you are duckin' and dodgin' stray rubber bands.) Even though the name's appropriate, Young D's done seen enough for more than many lifetimes, and the knowledge he drops below comes from his experience and his heart. Thanks, D, for keeping up the commitment to The Beat (and for wearing that fly old school Jordan jersey the other day — go Bulls!).

It All Started When

I was eight years old I had moved from one neighborhood to another and it was a coincidence — the 'hood I moved from didn't really get along with the 'hood I was moving to. So I guess as a youngster you want to fit in, and that's exactly what I was trying to do by doing things such as gang banging, saying I was from a certain set, and all that dumb shhh that will get you messed up. And that's exactly what happened, slowly but fa sho'ly.

It went something like this. I say the wrong thing and somebody wanted to fight me, and you should know what that one thing was — if you don't, I'm a tell you. Say I'm kicking it with some new friends and one of them ask me where I'm from or where I came from. And I would say the set I came from and I guess they didn't like that set, so they had some young ninja fight me. So as I was fighting they started jumping me, I guess 'cause I was getting the best of the fight and they got mad. It was nothing but it was 'cause if I wouldn't have said I was from somewhere I wasn't and I really didn't know what I was getting myself into. And I also didn't really know nothing about the beef and all that set trippin' 'cause I was just a youngster.

But I'm a make a long story short: if you live somewhere in the 'hood or anywhere, don't start gangbanging 'cause it ain't worth it. And it's also a lot of consequences to everything you do. So stay up and stay safe and I'm out.

MR. CROW

It's been a long time since we last published a piece from Mr. Crow who writes us form the SHU in Corcoran State Prison. Unfortunately Mr. Crow sent us this piece a while back and finally now we have the chance to share his wisdom with The Beat readership. Hope to hear from Mr. Crow down the road, he has plenty to say, given what he says here!

Attention All Pimps, Playas, and To All Gente In General

It is a fact that all the prophets have been men!
But, they were born first through the wombs of
their honorable mothers who were women! Women
are the first teachers of men!
As a child,
we are taught to always respect our mothers!
¿Sabes que? (You know what?)
When we fall and get hurt, "mom is who we yell for.
We know mom will always ease the pain.
As men, it should be clear that all great men have a
good woman by their side,
so I ask, where does the disconnect come from?
When a boy becomes a "man"?
As my grandfather used to say about my
grandmother, "that's my rib boy!'
'Got's to take care of my rib!"
For those who don't know what that means,
just pick-up a Bible.
As for myself, I only wish to say to all women:
Thank you and you are appreciated!
And, to my own mother who I never got the chance
to say, "I love you mom."

As my grandfather used to say about my grandmother, "that's my rib boy!'

the 'hood I moved from didn't really get along with the 'hood I was moving to

SCOTT DONALDSON

***CMC WEST PRISON
We welcome Scott Donaldson to the pages of The Beat Within. This is Scott's first contribution to our pages and we are happy to give him the space to share his work. We do not know too much about Scott, but we are glad he has found us to channel his creative ideas and thoughts.***

Hello

This is my first time sending you any of my work. I started writing when I came to prison as a different way to express my self, other than drugs and violence. Now can't help but write and I hope my poetry inspires others, because we are not alone.

Blossom

Try to find the one rose
that might contain the
image of the tiger.

When found blooming
every phrase will have
a foundation in reality.

These fragments of language
leak off fingers. Each syllable
blossoms with an eye to the wild.

Hidden in darkness with the
sweet grass and the clovers
nothing is lost or forgotten.

Look out over the mountain
into the unknown, slowly peel
back these petals of life

inside is you.

LIL' SPANKS

Lil' Spanks has been dropping pieces on The Beat for quite awhile now, at least going back to his days in Trinity-Anza. This week for the first time, he breaks down the entire journey he's taken through various institutions, from the age of 11 in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall, to today — 19 years old and facing 32 years to life in Sacramento County Jail. He also shares a parable about the struggle each man fights within himself. We wish Lil' Spanks luck in his case and thank him for continuing to share his pieces with The Beat.

Game Over

32 to life
has got me stressin'
with that much time
might as well hit me with a lethal injection
That's what I'm tellin' my lawyer
but she's sayin' "It'll get lower"
DA's tryin' to toss me up
and wash me up
this is one of many fears
I'm just hopin' I get under 20 years
I'm only 19
my future is the state's penitentiary —
will I get worser than what I am
or will I change into a better man?
Maybe even' havin' the same endin'
in The Shawshank Redemption
on the beach scrapin' my boat . . .
But 32 to life
there's a chance I'll never come home
dazed and confused
gots to give it up!
Can't be actin' a foo'
I hold many victories mentally
but in reality
I'm the one to lose
I can't be the sugar in everybody else's mix
I'm stuck like chuck
knee deep in this shhh!
Fingers pointed towards me
considered as suspect one
armed and dangerous possibly carrying a gun
but I ain't packin' no heat
pictures were given up
by my family
and three different PDs
are on the hunt
searchin' for me
they tryin' to get me!
Operation Lil' Spanks
thickens
heard about tension
always knew there was friction
but I ain't trippin'
I was on that paper chase
I should've stayed in the Bay
but I came to Sacramento pluckin' these chickens
but that's beside my point!
I'm 'bout to get screwed by the system
they really want to do me in
but the hell with livin' the rest of my life in the Pen
I'm true off it!
Here we go!
I started at 11 years old
in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall
then to Advent's drug program
I failed that
then to James Boys Ranch
I didn't like their music so I refused to dance
on canteen night
I put my Nikes on and took flight
that easy!
I was gone
smashin' all the way back home
on the run for two weeks
on a mission for tweak
and daily dusted off PCP
Then I caught a jucy case
department 78
Judge Hyman slapped two years in my face
four hit and runs with a GTA
high speed chase
28 minutes ended dippin' a corna
that's when I got sent to Trinity-Anza in southern California
My first day had to come from the shoulders
I was born and raised
in San Jose
suited and booted
gots to keep my shoes tightly laced
but they was only testin' this soldier
flirtin' with rage
as my hate only grew stronger —
that's real!
I come from a war zone and make love on the battlefield
so Anza was nothin' to handle
I got so comfortable I was posted in sandles
Then in February of 2003 I turned 18
May 28th I was released
caught a plane back home and it was crackin' on my streets
I was only out for three weeks
and got busted as the funk really got deep
and there I was . . .
in Santa Clara County Jail
somebody had something against me
obviously
talkin' lies, spittin' fairy tales
those cats were phony and see through
but it was a crazy trip —
hated on by my own people
for every inch ever given I took two miles
and it broke my heart when my closest homies left me hangin'!
But I continue to smile
and blaze trees
their plot was to take me
and break me
you cats know me!
To chill
in the shade
observin' the real
and the fake
now in the jailhouse of mental
in Sacramento
lookin' at 32
with life behind it
so much to lose
now I'm really hard-timin' it!

Soldier's Story

An elder of the Cherokee Nation was teaching his grandchildren about life.

He said to them, "A fight is going on inside me. it is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, competition, superiority, and ego. The other wolf stands for joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. This same fight is going on in every other person, too."

The children thought about his story for a minute, and then one child asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The elder simply replied, "The one you feed."

CANDY *What begins as a sad reflection on the good times that are gone, this young writer, Candy, locked up in Maricopa Juvenile Hall, Arizona, leads us to a jumping off point that says: I am committed to a brighter future.*

I'm sorry homies, but I've changed my mind. It's time to stop smoking and wasting our time.

To My Homies

Homie, even though we don't kick it,
I have to admit I still have some love for your kids.
I remember the times we had our ups and downs,
When we used to bang our heads and that big bad brown.

Go out and have some crazy adventures,
How we come up with nicknames like Creeper and Beto.
The first time of that weed or that meth,
Or when we went to a funeral for my homie's death.

The first time we drank,
The first time we sang.
The first time we all cried and held each other's hand,
How much y'all think all this meant to me?

How much do y'all think I miss my reality?
Crazy lives was what we planned to live.
Being by each other all the time
No matter what we did.

Sometimes I reminisce of my homie Cholito,
My homie Snapper, Shadow, and that OG we call Hefita.
Now I see myself locked up in Durango,
Spending time in my cell because there's no way to go.

Some other homies are resting in peace.
While others sell dope to get that green.
But no matter of that, I feel so much apart.
You feel like I was stupid and never smart.

Why? Because the things that we did.
All the things we did to have a bad ass click.
I'm sorry homies, but I've changed my mind.
It's time to stop smoking and wasting our time.

JONATHAN *From a youth correctional facility in Ohio, Jonathan pours out his sad (and mad) tears on our pages — and we're grateful to be here for that purpose. All we hope is that you remember that you won't always feel the way you did when you wrote this poem, so hold on, and trust that things will look better one day.*

Heart Filled With Sorrow

The heart is filled with sorrow, and it's tearin' me apart.
Since the day I took my first breath, I was doomed from the start.
I explode without cause, he's tryin' to find in the flows.
So he can mail me more time, forget him and his laws.

It's me against the world, folk wants me to fall.
I don't wanna give up, bloody hands and all.
I heard the old folk speak, death travels in threes.
My grandma died on her knees, and God please take me.

I hurt every day, the devil blocks my way.
I must be going to hell, God, are you mad 'cause I don't pray?
Are you mad 'cause I don't pray, I used to pray every day.
I must be going to hell, because the devil blocks my way.

It's me against the world, the world against me.
I stand alone in this world, no one stands with me.
My head is full of bad thoughts, they are bad indeed.
I might not live tomorrow, but today I breathe.

M-R ***The Beat welcomes a new writer from N.A. Chaderjian Youth Correctional Facility (CYA), especially because of the positive message he spits. We add our voice (to his) wishing him a happy 19th birthday!***

Nothing Happens For A Reason

People use to say things happen for a reason. When I was young I didn't believe them because I didn't care, and I never thought I would get caught.

But now that I have been incarcerated for a year and some change, I've learned to open my eyes and realize that things do happen for a reason. Now that I have had this experience of being behind the wall and away from my loved ones (family), I now know that this is not the life for me.

I have about two years left in CYA, and when I get out I am never coming back. So I guess things do happen for a reason, because now I care and won't never stop!

Hello

Well my name is M.R. and I will be 19 this August 19. A friend of mine that goes by the name of "Tito" shot me your mag and I thought I could give it a shot and see if "The Beat Within" would like my "lil" piece that I wrote.

Well, I hope my words meet the print in your mag, and I know it's like 1 in 1,000,000, but at least I can say I tried.

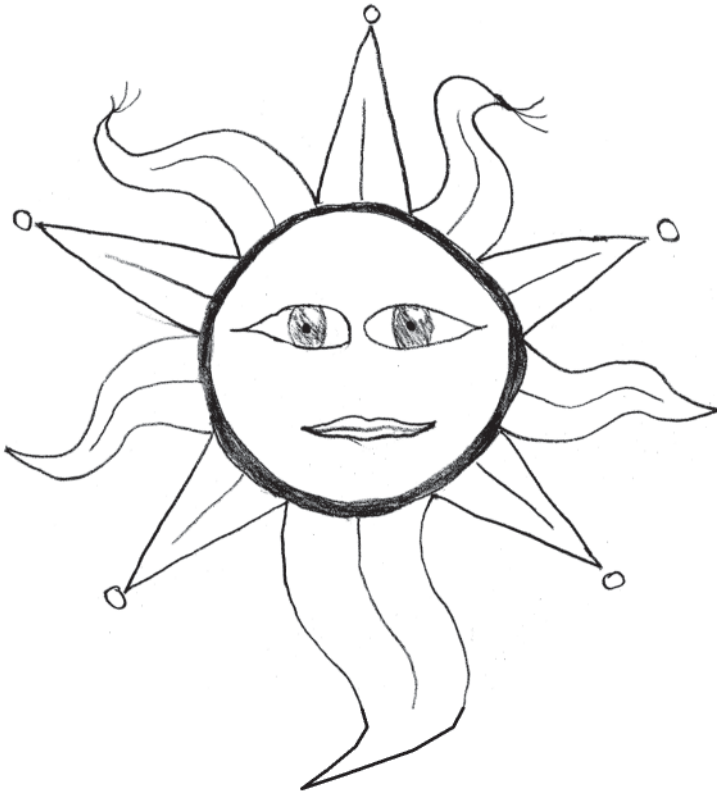
Happy Birthday to me, your friend …

JFK ***The following writer, JFK, once held it down in Beat workshops in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. Since then, he's gone on to the CYA, where he recently came across an issue of The Beat. Spurred by a piece he read therein, he decided to reach back out and put it down for The Beat once again. In his piece, JFK deals with a touchy issue, and we respect him for both the courage to put himself out there, and for the ability to respect those who seem to be calling for his head. Right on, JFK — good to have you pack.***

People Do Change

My name is John, and I'm currently at a CYA facility. I'm an old Beat writer from Santa Clara County and I got ahold of an issue of The Beat and came across a piece — "You're Right I'm Wrong" by Drusilla the Hun from Walden House PSK. She stated that "All rapists and molesters need to die."

Well, she is somewhat right, but some people do make mistakes. I should know — I'm on a hall full of sex offenders, and most of them did some stupid stuff. But they do change with the right treatment. So the statement she stated about "Once an addict, always an addict; once a rapist, always a rapist" is not always the case, but she has the right of freedom of speech. That's what I got to say about that.



I'm on a hall full of sex offenders, and most of them did some stupid stuff. But they do change with the right treatment.

SCION ***We welcome a new talented poet in Scion aka G-Man #1 who writes us from New Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. The following poem is a very powerful visual piece of work to say the least. We do hope although we received this submission some time ago that Scion will find the time to trust us that his next effort will be represent in our pages in a timely manner.***

A Falling Sun

As my thoughts wandered
I found myself standing in the far regions of darkness
Peering out of a lone window drawn to it by thought
Unable to escape the outcome
Like slow rain kissing the wings of a lost bird
Dancing beneath the falling sun
As each kiss tempts him to move with courage
With out a consistent beat
Like he, I am lost in thought

My rehabilitation came at the hands of my own doing rather from the help of the system for as I grew older, I matured, but by that time, I had become a lifer in prison.

With all the youth and adult facilities being built, what's left for rehabilitation? Very little, if anything at all. I've been through it and have seen it, and I can honestly tell you that if only I had been given more attention to by the system, and proper care, then things for me may have been different. That's the honest truth.

check out the rest of Eddie's BWO piece on page 50